



## VC's message

I have continued to focus on the revised University Strategy and on our finances during the past few weeks. During this time I held an open forum on the University's future direction at Medway on 18 October. Thank you to Medway colleagues for their engaging and enthusiastic contributions to the discussion.

The pressures on the University budget will require some challenging and difficult decisions. I was pleased to have been able to discuss the issues with the Senior Leadership Forum last week and get their views and ideas for how we move forward with our financial and recruitment challenges. We then compared notes on the lessons from the industrial dispute earlier this year, with communication being a key feature of this discussion. We also had an initial exchange of views on the University Structures Project. Denise Everitt set out where the work had got to, and sought views on the options were being formed. The work is still in the early stages and the discussion as to what benefits we would be seeking was helpful. Work will continue on this project with further input from Senior Leaders Forum before Christmas and again at the Senior Leadership Forum conference in February.

One of my greatest pleasures as Vice-Chancellor is to find out first-hand about some of the fantastic work that is being carried out at the University. Last week I visited the [Beacon Observatory](#) with Dr Dirk Froebrich and Justyn Campbell-White, a Kent PhD student. Justyn's thesis title is "Shape Analysis of Galactic HII Regions". It was excellent to see the legacy of one of the Beacon projects from the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and to hear about how students, staff and the public are all engaging with the observations and research that is being produced. If you have a particular example of excellence in teaching, research or engagement you want to share and highlight then please do get in touch.



Elephant Trunk Nebula (or "IC1396A"), Beacon Observatory

## Executive Group Update

The Extended Executive Group concluded this year's planning round meetings, holding discussions with Kent Business School, Human Resources, Information Services, Student Services, Development Office and Academic Division on 23 October. The conclusions reached at these and other planning fora will be considered at an Executive Group meeting on 20 November which will consider prioritisation of bids for resources in order to deliver the revised University Strategy.

Extended Executive Group also received progress reports from the Recruitment Oversight Committee and on the current financial position. The group approved a report on Programme Approval and Curriculum Design which included the need for schools to review and update as appropriate their portfolio of programmes on an annual basis.

## Senior Leadership Forum Update

Since the Route to Recognition for Experienced Staff (RRES) was successfully accredited by the Higher Education Academy in September 2017, fourteen colleagues have been awarded Senior Fellowships included academics, Deans and Associate Deans, plus tutors and staff from Professional Services. More information about gaining recognition from the Higher Education Academy and applying is [available on the teaching pages](#).

Congratulations to Dr Jan Loop who is leading a [€10 million European Research Council Synergy Grant](#) along with the universities of Madrid, Nantes and Naples. The research project is looking at the key role the Qur'an played in European cultural and religious history.

Robert Green, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Science has been asked by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to deliver a two-day workshop to senior officials from China.



## Autumn Budget

Yesterday, the [Chancellor, Philip Hammond set out the last budget](#) before Brexit. His reflection that austerity is "finally coming to an end" echoed back to the Prime Minister's claim that austerity was over at Conservative Party Conference earlier this month. Despite a downgrading of 2018 growth from 1.5% to 1.3%, forecasted growth for 2019 is now expected at 1.6% with a steady increase in growth from 1.4% - 1.6% from 2020-2023. Forecasts also suggest that there will be 800,000 more jobs by 2022.

There were a number of notable announcements related to higher education. £1.6bn for R&D investments were announced of which £55m was new money. This is broken down to £20m in 2019-2020 for the UK Atomic Energy Authority and £35m for a national quantum computing centre. A fund of £695m will be made available to small businesses to encourage taking on apprentices. The budget also confirmed previous announcements on the £9,250 tuition fee freeze for 2019/20 and another £3bn sale of the student loan book expected in 2021-2022. £5m of funding for 10 University Enterprise Zones was also announced. These will aim to promote collaboration between universities and businesses, support start-ups and scale-ups and disseminate management skills.

Other announcements relevant to the higher education sector include the personal allowance threshold to rise from £11,850 to £12,500 next April, as well as the National Living Wage to increase by 4.9% from £7.83 to £8.21. The Chancellor also revealed that an extra £500m had been made available for preparations for leaving the European Union. The Spring Statement next March could be upgraded to a full Budget if needed in the light of Brexit negotiations and exit.

## University Update

The contributions of colleagues were acknowledged at a special 25 Year lunch last week. Congratulations to those colleagues below who have served 25 years at the University. [Lizanne Allcock](#), School of Psychology; [Professor Howard Bowman](#), School of Computing; [Professor Mark Burchell](#), Dean for Faculty of Sciences; [Janet Carter](#), School of Computing; Richard Douglas, Income Office; Kay Friend, Kent Hospitality; Ivan Jefferies, Kent Hospitality; [Dr Michelle McCarthy](#), Tizard Centre; [Professor Adrian Podoleanu](#), School of Physical Sciences; [Dr Gary Robinson](#), School of Biosciences; Mark Tutt, Estates.

Congratulations to the [School of Psychology](#), [School of Computing](#), [School of Engineering and Digital Arts](#), and the [Schools of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research](#) who have all been awarded Athena Swan Bronze. The Athena Swan Charter is designed to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment in higher education and research.

## KentVision Update

As some of you may already know, a decision has been made to postpone the launch of the KentVision project, scheduled for January 2019.

KentVision, which will bring major business improvements to the administration of the student lifecycle from enrolment to congregations, has a high-level of interdependency on a number of other University initiatives and, with this in mind, the Steering Group has taken a particularly robust approach in its assessment of the current position.

I would like to stress that, while the decision to postpone the launch was difficult to make, the need to ensure the successful delivery and implementation of such a business-critical system is paramount.

I would also like to thank all those who have worked with the KentVision team in the development of the project, and appreciate your continued support. Work is underway to identify a revised launch date and we will update you as soon as the new date is confirmed.

*David Nightingale*

## Policy Update

The Department for Education has [responded to the consultation](#) on the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF). The response addresses issues raised with grade inflation, teaching intensity and improvements to subject-level TEF. The responses to the consultation have informed the second year of the subject-level pilots.

The UPP Foundation's Civic Universities Commission [has released a progress report](#) on their interim findings. The main areas of focus is adult education provision and widening access. The main report will be published in early 2019, with the aim of feeding into the Post-18 Education and Funding Review.

Universities UK and the CBI have also published a [report on the decline of part-time students and flexible learning](#). Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 the number of people studying part-time dropped by 37%. The report sets out a number of policy recommendations to tackle this problem.