

# Building an excellent university

2015 – 2020

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# Building an excellent university 2015 – 2020

In the ten years since we were granted University status, we've built substantially on the achievements of our predecessor institutions. Solent today is a flourishing community of academics, students and professional services staff with a reputation for the quality of our teaching, for our engagement with industry and for the employability of our graduates.

This strategy sets out where we want to be by 2020, and how we intend to get there. The world of higher education is changing significantly and so must we. Greater competition, higher expectations from students and employers, and the need to adapt to an increasingly globalised world, provide us with both opportunities and challenges. I am confident that as an enterprising and energetic institution, we will find innovative ways of responding to the opportunities and resourceful ways to overcome the challenges.

Over the next five years our task is to create an outstanding experience for our students, and to become the workplace of choice for all our staff. We need to build on our areas of

excellent research, with research running through our curricula, informing teaching and contributing to innovation. And in line with our commitment to social justice, we must open our doors to students who would have previously been excluded from higher education, because of either their subject choices in school or their learning styles.

The strategy is bold and ambitious, but draws on our strengths and responds to what we know about the conditions of the future. It will require all of us, working closely together, to realise this ambition. The reward will be an excellent university, answering the needs of societies and economies at a local, national and international level.

**Professor Graham Baldwin**  
**Vice-Chancellor**



## Southampton Solent in a nutshell

We're a dynamic and ambitious international university spanning industries from fashion to engineering.

We have a reputation for developing grounded, well-prepared graduates with the skills and experience employers want. Currently we teach more than 19,000 students from over 100 countries.

We offer practical and professional education; our distinctive courses are uniquely tailored to industry needs. Our approach is creative, inclusive and student-focused and we have strong international ties. Amongst other things we're home to one of the world's leading maritime training providers, a unique service matching creatives to industry, and one of the UK's leading competitive sports programmes.





## Our mission

We are dedicated to the pursuit of excellent university education that enables learners from all backgrounds to become enterprising citizens and responsible leaders, while also promoting economic and social prosperity for the communities we serve.



There is a real warmth in this university. This is a very progressive place, I can feel the determination, there is a lot of innovation and ambition is very high.



Martyn Phillips

Businessman and Solent Hon Doctor of Business

## Our vision

Our vision is for Southampton Solent to be an inclusive university which is a catalyst for social justice, social mobility and economic prosperity – providing access to top-class university education for all those qualified and able to benefit. We want to see the University offer an outstanding student experience, characterised by the highest quality engagement and intellectual challenge – an experience which develops students' self-confidence, enhancing their career and life prospects.

The University we're creating will be vibrant and successful, known nationally and internationally for the excellence of our teaching and for our sector-leading integration of theory and practice. We will be research active and informed with areas of world leading activity underpinning key and distinctive curriculum areas in support of 'real world' learning. We want to be the 'applied' university for Southampton and the Solent region, with accelerating national and international influence enabled by imaginative partnerships at home and abroad.



Our aspiration –  
putting students  
at the heart of  
what we do

Our students will have maximised their potential and will leave as self-confident graduates, highly satisfied with their university experience and recognising the value of their time with us.

“

Southampton Solent University has proved that it cares deeply that students should be creative. ”

Richard Demarco CBE OBE  
internationally renowned artist and promoter of the visual arts.  
Honorary Doctor of Arts

## PEOPLE EXPERIENCE

LEARNING AND  
TEACHING

RESEARCH AND  
INNOVATION

STUDENT  
ACHIEVEMENT

INTERNATIONALISATION

RECRUITMENT

REPUTATION

The seven key priorities

### Strategic priorities 2015 – 2020

Our student satisfaction, progression rates, achievement and employability will be above benchmark.

Our **learning and teaching** strategy will be delivering innovative and excellent approaches which meet the needs of our students. The focus will be on engagement, with applied activity based on professional experience or research.

We will be **research informed and research active** as a platform for our teaching, building on our developing expertise in innovation and enterprise, and drawing on the applied expertise that exists across the institution. As a fundamental underpinning to this we will have successfully achieved research degree awarding powers.

In preparing our students for an increasingly globalised world we will have achieved an increase in our international student numbers and built **international partnerships** both to enable this and to provide more opportunities for our students to go overseas. As a result of achievement in these areas, but recognising the volatile environment and competitive pressures, we will aim to deliver moderate growth in **recruitment** of student numbers across full time, part time, undergraduate, postgraduate, international and different modes of learning.

As we deliver on the above, we will extend understanding of our achievements and will enhance our **reputation** across a wide range of stakeholders. We will be an institution with confident staff and students and an improved league table position.







# People experience

The people experience strand of the strategy will deliver an excellent experience for those who work and study at Solent University.

Realisation of our future and delivering the performance needed to execute across all our strategic priorities is dependent on our staff, our students and our community of stakeholders. Our 'people experience', in its many forms, is therefore an overarching part of the plan.

Over the next five years Solent University will continue to invest in and develop its people so that all staff and students are engaged in and committed to delivering on our strategic priorities. At the same time we will be supporting all our people to aspire to, and deliver excellence, setting high expectations and standards in all areas and giving recognition for those achieving them.





## Objectives

### Valuing our people

We are committed to developing staff and students to their full potential, valuing the diverse contributions that come together to produce a vibrant and innovative community. We will:

- Recruit and retain excellent staff and aim to attract all students who can benefit from the higher education experience, whatever their background;
- Recognise and reward excellence in contribution especially those that reflect fully Solent University's values and ambitions;
- Recognise and develop the talents of our existing people to enable them to fulfil their potential and contribute to building an excellent University;
- Underpin all aspects of our people experience with a commitment to equality and diversity;
- Provide opportunities to enhance staff and student well-being.

### Developing our people

Staff and students need regular feedback and development opportunities to realise their full potential and to achieve the high standards which we will require. We will:

- Enable regular and meaningful discussions on performance, personal and career development for staff and a high level of support for students;

- Encourage students to become self-confident, autonomous and enquiring learners;
- Provide effective management and leadership programmes for all new and existing managers;
- Provide dedicated development programmes to support specific strategic priorities, e.g. internationalisation and research.

### Transforming the people experience

To become a place of choice to work and study will require us to provide an environment and approach that underpins our values and aspirations for the future. We will:

- Engage early and effectively with staff and students on a wide range of issues that affect their time at Solent University;
- Update, modernise and improve the experience for new people joining the University;
- Develop flexible and modern employment and learning arrangements that enhance the students' Solent experience;
- Address issues that inhibit or prevent flexibility and accountability;
- Empower all colleagues to confidently deliver enhanced and sustainable services to students and other stakeholders.



## Targets and milestones for staff

(those for students are reflected within the other key priorities)

- Review and update people recruitment and resourcing strategies and processes;
- Introduce new processes and induction programme for new starters;
- Increase the percentage of staff holding highest relevant professional qualification/membership of relevant professional bodies;
- Introduce role profiles aligned to strategic priorities that provide career development routes for all people;
- Introduce a strategic development plan for managers to support succession planning;
- Embed active participation in performance management throughout the University through the introduction of a Performance and Development Review Scheme (PDR) for all staff;
- Increase, year on year, objectives achieved with reference to Solent University's values;
- Introduce a multi-faceted approach to people engagement including the launch and running of surveys and more frequent 'temperature' tests;
- Improve performance to 2015 baseline on staff satisfaction;

- Maintain or exceed higher education (HE) benchmark (ECU annual report) position on equality and diversity indicators for all designated 'protected characteristics'.

“

Solent practises things that other universities only play lip service to – ethnic diversity, disabilities and different backgrounds.”

John Lloyd CBE

Comedy writer and television producer and Honorary Doctor of Media









# Learning, teaching and student achievement

We will provide excellent and engaging learning opportunities, integrating theory and practice through delivery of innovative, inclusive and intellectually stimulating teaching to develop self-confident and highly employable graduates, who have maximised their educational potential.



The student experience is a key element in the 'people experience', which lies at the heart of our strategy. We recognise that excellence in teaching and learning are traditional goals of higher education and our strategy will be firmly based on the concept of students and staff as members of the same community of learners and partners in the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

High quality engagement and intellectual rigour will characterise our student experience. Research-informed teaching and applied activity based on professional experience or research will underpin our curriculum, as will appropriate use of leading-edge technology-enhanced learning.

Our programmes will be inclusive, relevant and designed around intellectually-stimulating research questions and problem-solving activities so that our students are able to develop as autonomous learners. We will support our staff in producing excellent scholarship and research and encourage the engagement of students as researchers.

We will contribute to national and international thinking about the relationship between theory and practice by increasing our expertise in the delivery of research-informed teaching. This will strengthen our international reputation for the excellence of our teaching and learning and for our sector-leading integration of theory and practice.

We acknowledge that high quality teaching, effective course organisation and management and strong pastoral support are all crucial aspects in the delivery of an excellent student experience and in maximising student achievement. We will support our staff in delivering these aspects by recognising and rewarding high quality teaching and academic leadership. A new Solent Learning and Teaching Institute will promote academic development across the University. We have made considerable progress in increasing the teaching qualifications of our staff: this work will be accelerated through the Solent Learning and Teaching Institute which will co-ordinate the delivery of the cross-institutional Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education for new staff and the preparation of applicants for Fellowships of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). We will continue to embed the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for all teaching staff.

We recognise the opportunity presented by the significant investment in our estate and our IT infrastructure to improve the learning environment over the life of the new Strategy. The Solent Learning and Teaching Institute will co-ordinate a cross-University programme to develop world-class learning through the use of digital technologies by staff and students. This will allow us to ensure that the use of leading-edge technology-enhanced learning is fully embedded into the academic life of the University. Together, the new academic teaching building,





the Learning and Teaching Institute and the technology will help us to respond to the ever emerging and changing requirements of our diverse population of students.

We have achieved significant progress in improving the employability of our students but more work will be undertaken to secure opportunities for all of our students to gain industry experience through placements and through real-world experience embedded within the curriculum. We will strengthen our network of alumni and external partners to support the employability of our students and to internationalise their experience wherever possible. Our self-confident, well-educated and entrepreneurial graduates will be able compete successfully in the global employment market.

To deliver on this priority we will foreground the views of our students and ensure that they are directly involved in the design and implementation of the relevant initiatives.

“

Southampton Solent University has gained a reputation of understanding business, knowing what it wants and needs. Employers don't employ degrees, a degree gets you noticed, but it won't get you the job alone – employers employ people and Solent prepares its graduates with industry-focused skills to enrich businesses. ”

**Jimmy Chestnutt**

Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chief Executive  
and Solent Honorary Doctor of Business



## Objectives

To strengthen our international reputation for the excellence of our teaching and learning and for our sector-leading integration of theory and practice by:

- Ensuring we fully understand the wants and needs of our student community in terms of learning and ensure we respond accordingly;
- Underpinning our curriculum with internationally-recognised research and professional experience;
- Ensuring that our courses are intellectually stimulating and inclusive with a focus on relevant global concerns;
- Contributing to national and international pedagogic practice by increasing our expertise in the delivery of research-informed teaching;
- Encouraging and supporting our students to become autonomous and enquiring learners through engagement in research;
- Supporting our staff as teachers through the work of the Solent Learning and Teaching Institute;
- Recognising and rewarding excellent teaching and professional practice;
- Delivering improvements in student progression, high levels of satisfaction and the fulfilment of individual potential.

To deliver an excellent student experience by:

- Ensuring effective learning and teaching through peer observation of teaching;
- Ensuring that students benefit from effective course organisation and management;
- Recognising and rewarding good practice in pastoral support;
- Establishing a student hub to provide improved advice and guidance
- Strengthening academic services for students, through the use of online, digital solutions and improved business processes;
- Using predictive analytics and specialist staff to improve student progression throughout the student lifecycle.

To provide an enhanced learning environment for students and staff by:

- Increasing the use of leading-edge technologies to enhance face-to-face, blended and online learning;
- Maximising the learning opportunities offered by our significant estates development;
- Implementing a cross-University academic development programme in the use of new technologies co-ordinated by the Solent Learning and Teaching Institute.





## Targets and milestones for staff

To enhance the global employability prospects of our students by:

- Embedding real-world experience through work placements and live briefs across all of our programmes;
- Strengthening our network of alumni and external partners to improve the employability of our students and to internationalise their experience wherever possible;
- Building the social and cultural capital of our students, with particular focus on those from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- Developing a university community that is confident, articulate and digitally literate.

The University will establish clear targets and milestones through to 2020 as part of the more detailed Learning and Teaching Strategy. Performance indicators reflect the student lifecycle and will include:

- To maintain or increase entry tariff requirements;
- To improve levels of student satisfaction;
- To increase the number of academic staff with doctorates and/or relevant industry experience;
- To increase the number of academic staff with a relevant teaching qualification and/or HEA Fellowship;
- To increase the number of students with real-world experience gained through work placements;
- To improve student progression and completion rates;
- To increase the number of students progressing from undergraduate to postgraduate studies;
- To increase the percentage of graduates in professional or managerial employment or engaged in freelance activities;
- To increase the number of successful student business start-ups.









# Research and innovation

We will be a research-active University committed to research-informed teaching and innovation based on new knowledge and enterprise.

Research will be one of the defining features of our University, underpinning the curriculum, informing teaching and contributing to innovation of regional, national or international significance. Innovation in our terms is defined as including novel outcomes and applications from all of our discipline areas and enterprise. During the life of this Strategy we intend to make a step-change in our commitment to research and innovation with the expectation that all of our academic staff will be involved in applied research or knowledge transfer by 2020, working at the forefront of their field. We will strengthen our research infrastructure in order to support our academic staff, establishing a new Research and Innovation Office.





This will oversee the expansion of our programme of training for research supervisors, co-ordinate our support for external research funding bids, improve our arrangements for commercialising intellectual property and promote further knowledge transfer projects and contract research. Our staff commitment to research and innovation will be facilitated by enabling policies, processes and working practices. Similarly, we will ensure that students are exposed to research throughout their time at the University and that they have opportunities to be involved or engaged in research on a regular basis. Research informed activity will be a characteristic from induction to graduation.

After ten years as a university we believe that it is timely to make an application for our own research degree-awarding powers. This application will run in tandem with our increased emphasis on research and innovation. We intend to build on the achievements of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014, which identified both world-leading and internationally-excellent pockets of research within the University and saw a rise in our overall grade point average compared to Research Assessment Exercise 2008. We will invest further in these areas, linking them to the new structure so that each of our schools has an identified focus for research and innovation. We will also continue to develop cross-institutional research groups based on interdisciplinary areas such as health, and addressing real-world issues. In terms of the next REF, we aim to improve

our performance and enhance our position in the research league table.

We will maximise our external research income from Research Councils UK, charities and Government departments, as well as seeking research contracts from commercial organisations and increasing other enterprise activity such as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) and short courses. Sustainability remains a challenge: we will encourage an enterprise-based approach to research, connecting the University with issues of importance to the surrounding community. We will grasp the opportunities offered by the European Structural and Investment Funds, working closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and other local universities and Further Education (FE) colleges. Further afield institutional partnerships will be formed to support bids for European Union funding under the Horizon 2020 programme. Research partnerships will become a key aspect of all of our wider international collaborations.

Our postgraduate research student community is a key element of our capacity-building for the future: we intend to increase the size of this community by co funding a number of doctoral bursaries linked to the new school structure. We will seek external partners to provide the remainder of the funding for these bursaries, thereby strengthening engagement with businesses and other organisations. Professional doctorates will



be introduced as part of our commitment to increasing the number of academic staff with research degrees. We will also mark our tenth anniversary as a university by establishing ten Anniversary Research Fellowships in our existing and planned research fields, with six of these linked to School research clusters and four reserved for multi-disciplinary themes and 'grand challenges' facing the world today. Support for the career development of researchers will meet the expectations of the UK Research Concordat and the University will meet the required standards of the Concordat for Public Engagement in Research.

Our commitment to research and innovation will be evident throughout our taught programmes. We will promote research-informed teaching and ensure that all of our students understand research ethics and engage with applied research projects. We recognise that providing undergraduate opportunities in research can take many forms and is central to building individual self-confidence and enhancing employability, as well as offering wider societal benefits. We will appoint a Professor of Research-Informed Teaching and provide an extensive programme of academic development in support of student researchers at every level.

We are proud of our achievements in research and innovation and ambitious for the future. We will proactively publicise our current and future achievements, encouraging our staff to

participate in disciplinary activities which carry esteem and using media and public engagement to promote the research and innovation of our staff and students and our wider contribution to the economy and society.

“

The knowledge that I gained during my time here underpins everything I do now. I firmly believe it has got me to where I am today. ”

**Richard Welsh**

Head of Digital Cinema Operations for Technicolor Creative Services  
UK and Southampton Solent University graduate and Honorary  
Doctor of Technology





## Objectives

- To secure research degree-awarding powers;
- To improve our infrastructure through the Research and Innovation Office;
- To establish a strong focus for research and innovation in each School;
- To develop cross-institutional research groups based on interdisciplinary areas and addressing real-world issues;
- To improve our performance in the next REF and enhance our position in the research league table;
- To improve our external reputation for research and innovation and maximise our external research income from the LEP, Research Councils UK, charities, Government departments and the European Union;
- To require research-informed teaching and student engagement in research;
- To strengthen the University's overall performance in research and innovation.

## Targets and milestones for staff

The University will establish clear targets and milestones through to 2020 as part of the more detailed Research and Innovation Strategy. Performance indicators will include:

- Improved performance in the next REF;
- Annual increase in the proportion of academic staff with high quality research outputs or knowledge transfer partnerships;
- Annual increase of external research income;
- Annual increase of income from contract research, consultancy and services to business and the community;
- Improvement in the rate of successful PhD completions;
- Annual increase in the number of postgraduate research students, including staff.











# Internationalisation

In preparing our students for an increasingly globalised world we will achieve an increase in our international student numbers and build sustainable partnerships.

The overall strategy focuses on the student experience and working with our students to prepare them for a future in an increasingly global society. A core element of this will be building skills, knowledge and competencies of an international nature in order to achieve the best possible student outcomes in employability. We know from employers that such experience is highly valued in graduates.

Many industries and sectors are now globalised or international in nature and this trend continues. Even for UK graduates who will work in the immediate Southampton area, the rise of the internet/world wide web as information and transaction tools means that their employment will be impacted by global corporations and businesses offshore.



The growth of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) and MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey) markets means that some knowledge of these or other cultures is a vital aid to competitive advantage in the 'global village'.

The aim will be to make outward student mobility as attractive and easy as possible for first-generation students who may not have considered this option before starting at Solent University. This is part of our commitment to social justice. A wide offer of options will be available from virtual projects with international partners, through short visits/field trips and projects overseas to semester or years abroad, or full progression to our partners. For students unable to study abroad, there will be greater exposure to students from different backgrounds and cultures as a result of increased recruitment providing opportunities for group work with international students in the UK.

The strategy will see annual growth in numbers of international students and fee income, student mobility and partnerships.

The curriculum portfolio will need to be reviewed in order to reduce current barriers to student mobility, such as long-thin units/assessment, and to introduce further units on international topics. Language and cultural elements, already available to mobility programme students, will be expanded with the aid of the School of Business, Law and Communications to underpin this internationalisation drive.

The means to our expansion in these areas will be ambitious partnerships with international institutions and employers. These will provide a more secure and sustainable route, in addition to the current one-way recruitment through agents, which will still be used judiciously to supplement partnerships. Partnerships will routinely involve exchange of students and staff and also include research and innovation, where those in emerging markets can learn from our methodologies and creativity. Enterprise models, such as Solent Creatives and social enterprise will be used as part of our intellectual capital in developing such partnerships.

We will work with international employers to provide a range of projects, group work and placements in the UK and abroad that help develop the right employment skills and expose students and graduates to different working cultures. Targets in the UK will include current and future exporters, thus helping the economy.

We will use contacts with international alumni, as the Student Relationship Management (CRM) project develops, to help to facilitate these aims. These will also provide a pool of talent to consider for staff appointments to resource the strategy





## Objectives

- To increase opportunities for students and staff to actively engage with the internationalisation process and the international community through curriculum opportunities and external events;
- To develop an international aspect to the Research and Innovation Strategy, including opportunities for people to undertake joint research and knowledge transfer with international companies and organisations;
- To increase the number of international students both on- and off-campus through partnerships; the China and Malaysia strategies will be key here;
- To promote Solent University as an international brand by consistently applying the principles of the brand refresh and thereby improve reputation;
- To ensure that all Solent University UG (Home) students have the opportunity to learn a language and/or study abroad/have an international experience in the UK;
- To internationalise the curriculum to enable the above, including reducing barriers to mobility, such as long-thin units/assessment. Languages and cultural orientation, currently available on a limited basis to students engaging in outward mobility, to be made more widely accessible.

## Targets and milestones for staff

- Annual increase in the number of international students (EU, island and overseas) on our campuses benefiting from an excellent transnational student experience. The proportion will increase from 15% to 20% of total;
- Annual increase in the number of students enrolled offshore on Solent University programmes, including distance learning;
- Annual increase in the income from tuition fees paid by international students;
- Annual increase in the numbers of UK students experiencing a period of study or work overseas or engaging with international students in the UK.









# Recruitment

Recruitment remains a high priority; a continued and growing income stream will be needed to support investment in our strategic priorities.

The overall strategy calls for an increase in the quality of all of our activities and particularly focuses on the student experience and achievement. As a result of positive outcomes in these areas, but recognising the volatile environment and competitive pressures (particularly the lifting of the home market cap for 2015 and UK demographic decline expected in the period) we will aim for modest growth in student numbers.



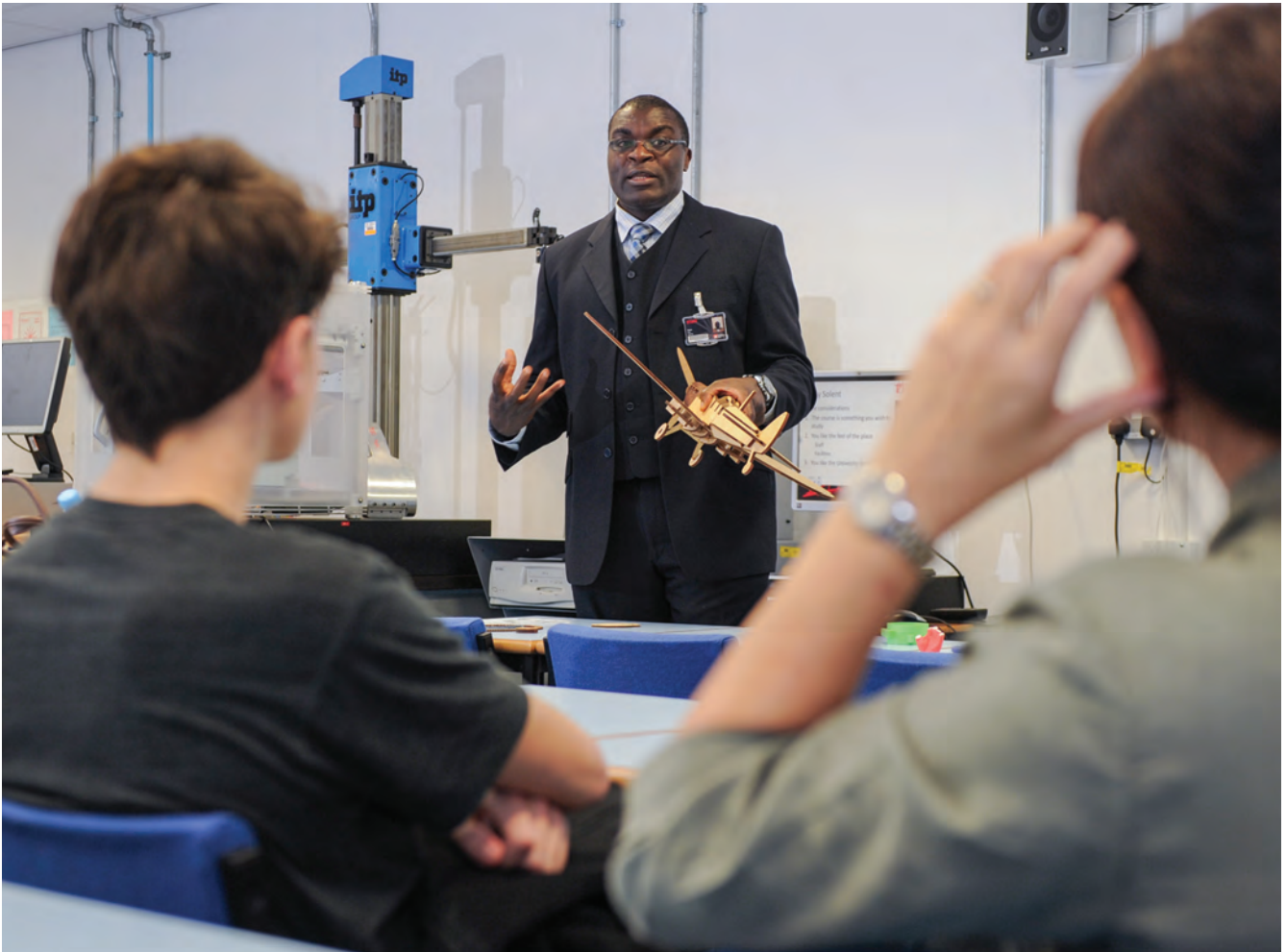
Part of this growth will come from an increased reputation because of our achievements and enhanced ability to communicate these. Another part of this growth will come from making the curriculum portfolio more attractive and adding new areas. A third element will come from building numbers in areas outside traditional full-time (FT) undergraduate (UG): postgraduate (PG); foundation programmes (perhaps in partnership with local FE colleges to enable a focus on the appropriate learning and teaching elements); part-time; work-based learning; higher-level skills/apprenticeships; accelerated degrees; and Continuing Professional Development (CPD). These different modes of learning for students will be important, both to attract the mature learner who has missed out on an excellent education at school or college, and to re-skill the regional, national and international economies. This will represent a strategic change from the emphasis on full-time undergraduate education at Solent University, which has mainly been driven by Government funding models, allied with company cut-backs on training and education during a long recession.

Some of these modes will require enhanced partnerships with employers, colleges and other education providers and new methods of funding. A fourth element will come from building international numbers. In the last few years, EU numbers for FT UG programmes (part of Home numbers) have shown strong growth but overseas and islands numbers have proved more

difficult. We have to be aware of the challenges of funding such EU student participation and uncertainties relating to fees and funding for the future make this a potential risk. However, the Internationalisation Strategy should help grow both areas, mainly through partnership activities, and this should provide a steadier and more sustainable source of recruitment.

Our commitment to social justice will continue to be reflected in targeting growth in conventional undergraduate students from the cohort taking BTEC vocational qualifications and a mix of A-level and BTECs. This area is continuing to show growth during the period of demographic decline in 18-year-olds in the region, predicted to continue to 2020. Such students need different support and teaching to succeed on degree programmes and this will be provided through the Learning and Teaching and other strategies. In addition, higher-level skills and work-based learning programmes will target students who have learning styles and outlooks that are not fully accommodated by conventional A-level routes. This is important for the re-skilling of the workforce in the Solent area, which faces a considerable skills gap as the 'baby boomer' generation retires.





It will be important to build and communicate the attractiveness of our offer to students in a highly competitive market. A continuation of Solent University's digital marketing strategy to keep us at the cutting edge will be vital. Continually researching our student offer and marketing materials with prospective and current students will be a key tool. This is contributing to developing and enhancing our reputation.

The organisation will be adapted to deliver an excellent service to the new schools through the professional services: Academic Services, Finance, and Marketing. Regarding the latter, the opportunity will be taken to pool all staff engaged in marketing and recruitment activities in order to build on best practice and to aid internationalisation.

Over time Student Relationship Management (CRM) will move from successful management of the first part of this process (Project 1: from first contact by a prospective student to the point of admission, now in use) to also covering events and open days, student advice and guidance and eventually alumni. The CRM programme will continue to be used to adapt and shape the underlying processes to improve service to prospective and current students.

We will use contacts with international alumni, as the CRM project develops, to help to facilitate the above aims. These will also provide a pool of talent to tap into for recruitment activities.



Solent University has a great policy of inviting those working in areas related to courses to come and talk to students about real life. It gives them an edge. ”

**Mike Moran**

musician, composer and conductor, Honorary Doctor of Music



## Objectives

- To review the curriculum and rationalise the full-time undergraduate area into programmes aligned with the new schools on which students achieve well and are easily explained in a crowded market;
- To develop new curriculum areas based around service industries;
- To continue the rationalisation of taught PG programmes to provide viable cohorts and explore and publicise the new Government funding packages;
- To develop modes of learning outside traditional full-time undergraduate;
- To rebuild the main external website especially to be mobile-device-friendly and to have an up-to-date look and better navigation;
- To finalise the implementation of the Student Relationship Management System (CRM) as a central part of all recruitment processes;
- To successfully pool admissions staff from the faculties and Academic Services to provide a seamless service for students from first contact to enrolment;
- To review, renew and monitor existing partnerships.

## Targets and milestones for staff

- Annual moderate increase in the number of home undergraduate HE students;
- Annual increase in the number of CPD students through part-time provision and short courses;
- Annual increase in post-graduate and international student numbers;
- Annual increase in the number of students registered for on-line and blended learning programmes.

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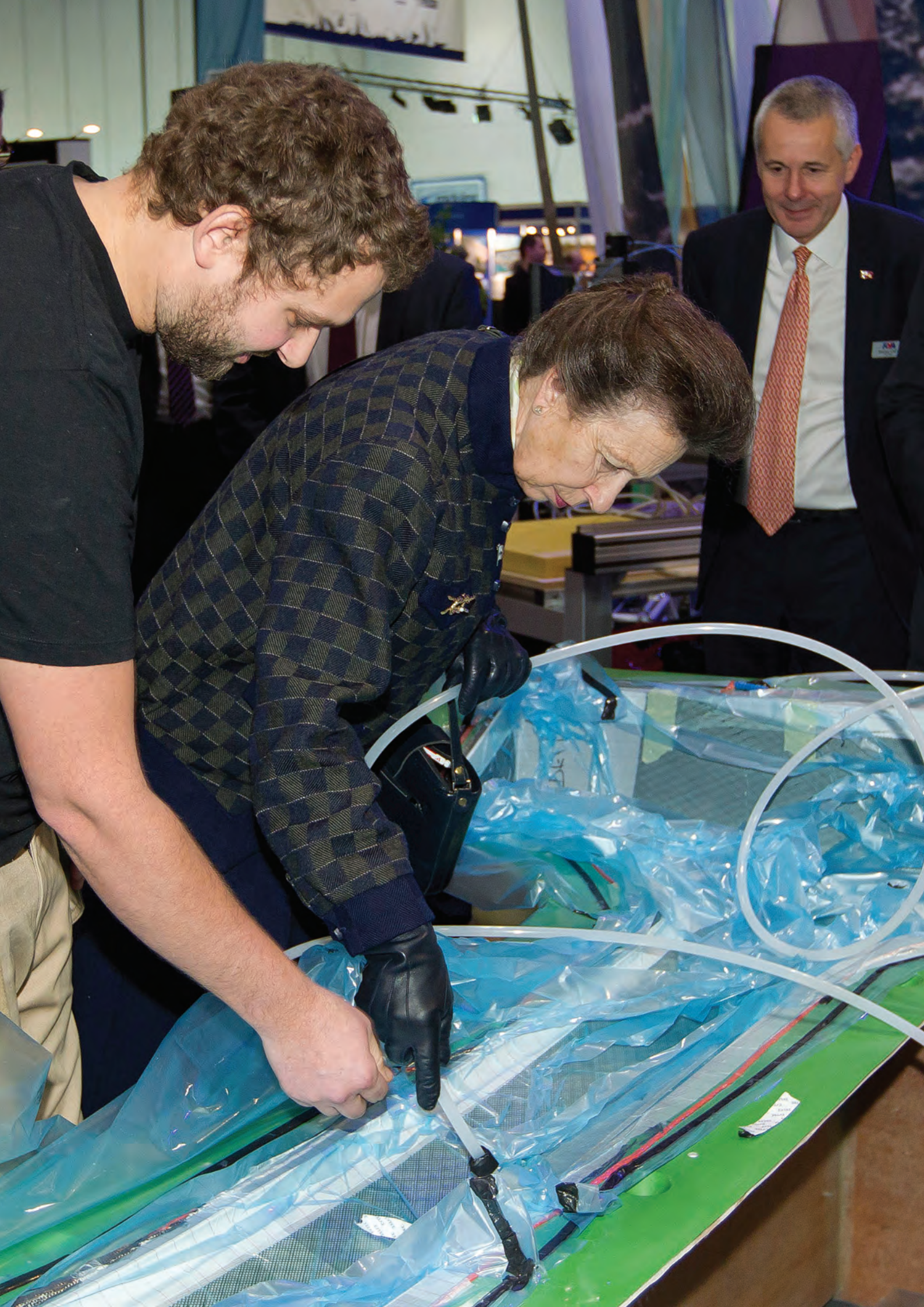
It is a great honour and privilege to be standing at the heart of one of the world's great maritime cities and in an institution dedicated to continuing that heritage. You are fortunate to come from a country with an unrivalled reputation for maritime skills and to have attended a university with a global reputation for excellence – make the most of the advantages you have. ”

Captain Nigel Palmer OBE MNM  
Honorary Doctor of Maritime Operations













# Reputation

Enhancement of our reputation will come from success in delivering on the strategic priorities. Our new Marketing Plan will change external and internal perceptions.

Achievement of our strategic priorities will enable positive communications internally and externally. Internal communication will be vital in building the confidence of our people, both students and staff, as word-of-mouth and instant social media are hugely important communication tools in Higher Education.

The Internationalisation and Recruitment Strategies call for growth through partnerships and these will be an important element in building reputation as they help to offset the negative impact of the current league table position, especially in overseas markets which are particularly sensitive to league tables.



We will adopt a more strategic approach to communications and map and analyse key stakeholders for the new strategy. Communications will be targeted accordingly. We will continue to project subject areas in which we excel and are best known such as sports, creative industries and maritime, whilst giving more emphasis to the comprehensive nature of our offer and the improvement and distinctiveness of areas such as our offer in Business to SMEs.

We will work with international employers to improve our reputation through a range of partnership activities that add value to the employer and our students and provide a rich source of positive communications materials.

We will use contacts with international alumni to help to enhance our reputation and we will increasingly feature their exploits and achievements in our communications. We will also use them to come back to the University and engage with students in order to build confidence and reputation. The physical environment and symbols of strategic change will be hugely enhanced at East Park Terrace when the 'Spark', the new academic teaching building, with new conference centre, opens in 2016. This will be a significant source of enhanced reputation and will project the essence of the new strategy to students, visitors and the wider community. On a more prosaic note, we will continue the change to displaying a wider range of materials reflecting the full academic life of the University in the general public areas.

We will continue to prepare an appropriate range of physical and digital marketing and communications materials to tell both external and internal stakeholders our success stories and what we are about. In line with the internationalisation strategy, these will be selectively available in a range of key languages.

It is imperative that in all our communications we leverage the main University brand and logo and utilise sub-brands (including Warsash Maritime Academy) and product/service names in a supporting role. The University has insufficient resources to maintain a wide range of brands, web-sites and materials. Rationalisation is long overdue. The brand hierarchy review, implemented in March 2015 will be important in setting a way forward and the communication of the launch of the new schools will be in line with this process.





## Objectives

- To map and analyse stakeholders for the strategy and target communications accordingly;
- To set up a series of public and business events including guest lectures, professorial talks, debates and showcases for the University;
- To maximise use of, and engagement with, social media and implement the findings of the digital audit;
- To implement the findings of the brand hierarchy review to improve brand saliency and maximise effectiveness of cross-communication of main brand and sub-brands;
- To rebuild the main external website and include business-facing and reputational elements and appropriate languages;
- To improve our league table position.

## Targets and milestones for staff

- Annual increase in the saliency of the Solent University brand in external media and publications;
- Implementation of digital audit in 2015;
- Brand hierarchy implementation and phase 1 of web revamp in time for 2015 enrolment;
- Move into the positions above 100 in *The Guardian* league table.



Solent University offers stimulating courses that give students real life opportunities. ”

Kathy Lette

Journalist and Honorary Doctor of Arts









# Future opportunities

The external environment has provided an increasing level of uncertainty for Higher Education in the past few years.

The external environment has provided an increasing level of uncertainty for Higher Education in the past few years. This is unlikely to change beyond the 2015 General Election. The sector has also become more competitive: private providers, the offer from Further Education, the funding regime and demographic changes all present significant challenges.

So although our strategic priorities as articulated above represent our current route to 2020, we have also considered a number of possible responses to scenarios and opportunities that may arise along the way.



Photograph courtesy of: University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust

## Regional hub for skills development

For some time there has been talk about the reintroduction of a binary line creating a two tier system for university or higher education. For example, there has been reference to the concept of 'Technical' universities although what this actually means is unclear and whether it represents a differentiation amongst existing universities or the upgrading of some Further Education providers is not known.

With an increasing emphasis on research it is clear that any differentiation based on league table position and outcomes to date could pose a risk. We need to be constantly mindful that potential changes such as those proposed also provide an opportunity and backdrop for Solent University to take a leading role in education development. The opportunity exists for us to capitalise on our integration of theory and practice and to offer a range of programmes aimed at developing the essential higher level skills. This would also capitalise on our excellence in employer engagement and further emphasise our 'real-world learning'.

Further Education Colleges are under increasing financial pressure at the moment and this is particularly apparent in Southampton and the Solent region. There is encouragement for Institutions to seek greater collaboration. The pressures are unlikely to reduce in the short to medium term and it is feasible that a strategic review of tertiary education will occur in the region. We must engage with such a process and build on our collaborative work to ensure that we position ourselves to gain from any proposed new developments. Strategic collaboration, or indeed acquisition, could enable the University to become a national lead with regard to the Higher Level Skills agenda, employer engagement and applied learning. It would develop a skills pathway from pre-degree through to PhD providing a progression route and potential supply of students as well as providing significant reputational benefits. The arrangement would also enable better integration of the activity located at Warsash Maritime Academy where some of the work closely aligns with that provided within the HE in FE environment.

Such a development could be seen as an extension of the concept of a regional hub for skills development. As stated, this could be facilitated by collaborating with a local FE college/sixth





## Broadening our reach

form college that would enable delivery of provision ranging across FE and HE levels, but with the distinctiveness of applied research informed teaching and the potential of utilising international partnerships. Importantly this could involve the creation of a separate school for foundation year and other level three provision and the establishment of a distinctive position for Solent University as a provider of very high quality practice-based and research-informed teaching, closely linked to regional and national priorities e.g. in maritime, health and support for small businesses.

The proposal could enable joint strategic planning of HE/FE provision and development of apprenticeships to better meet the needs of the regional economy. It would better serve learners and employers to promote progression and widening participation and it would enable educational institutions to use opportunities for shared services and more efficient use of the estates.

Within such provision we would consider innovative ways of delivering higher skills with further emphasis on degree apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships reflecting the on-going all party commitment to the higher skills agenda and the role of employers therein.

Such an innovative and flexible approach would also require emphasis on distance learning potentially through an institutional distance learning alliance. Whilst we have a small amount of distance learning provision there are opportunities both at home and internationally to extend this provision in specialist areas. One of the issues for an institution starting out on this journey is the cost of administrative back up and creation of academic content but this can be mitigated by the development of institutional alliances to share costs. We have one example of this model in the University and working examples in the US market.

Rather than adopt a reactive approach when an opportunity presents itself, the University will position itself for a proactive strategic intervention, knowing which opportunities to pursue and which to ignore if they arise. This approach will be adopted in the development of strategic projects for the future.

This strategy will take Solent forward to 2020 and will help us to deliver on our pledge to build an excellent university, responsive to the demands of all of our communities.









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