

Introduction



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It has been very gratifying to see so much progress in 2002/03 – not the modest, incremental variety (important though that can be) but the radical, ambitious kind. Sometimes the pace of change has been surprising, but overall the sense of a major institution on the move has been thoroughly welcome and invigorating.

The high standard of its teaching and research is the ultimate source of the University's strength. Underpinning that is the

organisation's relative financial stability, as indicated by Standard & Poor's in their autumn 2002 credit rating (which was an impressive AA) and recently reiterated by them. University Council has a responsibility to ensure that the financial and other conditions remain right for learning, discovery and enterprise to flourish.

Quality buildings and equipment are part of the story. 2002/03 has seen the opening of the Centre for the Study of the Evolution of the Terrestrial Planets and major progress with the Bristol Laboratory for Advanced Dynamics Engineering (BLADE) and the Dorothy Hodgkin Building (for neuroendocrinology). The Centre for Sport, Exercise and Health has also opened and has proved to be extremely popular. It has given a new focus to the precinct for students and staff as well as a boost to a growing branch of science. But the rapid progress to which I referred at the start has not all been about bricks and mortar. A new University Plan has been drawn up and an innovative research strategy published. Each of the three Pro-Vice-Chancellors has assumed responsibility for a particular portfolio and all the Deans are now financially accountable. The faculty structure has been revised, with Medicine divided into Medical and Veterinary Sciences and Medicine and Dentistry, whilst Law has teamed up with Social Sciences. A new budgetary process has been adopted, clearer and more consistent admissions principles and procedures devised and a comprehensive risk assessment and strategy finalised.

It is all too easy to appear complacent when reviewing a year's achievements. In fact, although it has been a good year, we are far from satisfied. We have much more work to do to enable our academic community to drive up standards even further, to provide the kind of facilities and support our students need and deserve, to build our role in Bristol, the South West and the wider world and to streamline our administrative processes. The agenda is daunting but also exciting. I am confident we have the right people in place, ably led by the Vice-Chancellor, to continue delivering both the short- and long-term objectives.

In conclusion, I should like to pay tribute to Sir Jeremy Morse for his time as Chancellor and, in particular, for his help and advice during my tenure as Chairman of Council. Throughout the period he has been readily available to respond to my telephone calls and visits with advice to support the important decisions that Council has had to take. He is a man of empathy, charisma and wisdom.

Moger Woolley

Chairman, University Council

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