

IARU PRESIDENTS' MEETING SUMMARY **23-25 May 2022, hosted by the University of Cambridge**

The meeting opened with a joint presentation from Professor Sir Andrew Pollard (Oxford Vaccine Group, University of Oxford) and Dr Tonya Villafana (AstraZeneca) illustrating their work on the development of the COVID-19 vaccine. The Presidents debated the fundamental changes to academic and industrial collaboration prompted by the response to the pandemic.

Taking the opportunity to talk in person for the first time in two years, the Presidents shared regional updates from their institutions, reflecting on how this unusual period has changed their roles as university leaders. Crisis management, adapting to a different pace of decision-making and the roles of communication and engagement were all themes that were common across the different IARU institutions.

The tension was considered between improving sustainability and the travel associated with research collaborations and maintaining connectivity in a global network. Professor Ian Leslie (University of Cambridge) led the discussion which focused on sharing experiences around off-setting, the creation of carbon budgets, investment strategies across institutions and the need to create principles or categories around essential travel.

President Tan and Associate Professor Lum (National University of Singapore) led a session on the subject of mentoring in academic institutions, generating a stimulating debate about the difficulties junior academics face in securing academic-related posts, the competitiveness of salaries, and the balance between industrial and academic jobs and how this might affect mentoring within a university.

A particularly thought-provoking panel discussion was held between the Presidents and a group of Cambridge academics, drawn from a number of different disciplines. This open and frank discussion debated the increasing complications of international engagement and the resulting demand for an informed strategic approach in global collaboration. The conversation covered many difficult issues, such as managing current political sensitivities and the lack of a truly level playing field for international collaboration, and the Presidents agreed that drawing on each other's experience and support would be important in the future.

Two of the IARU groups, the Ageing, Longevity and Health (ALH) Initiative and the Librarians' Contact Group, presented updates on their work over the last year. In their research into healthy ageing, the ALH Initiative has benefitted greatly from the truly international membership of IARU. This has meant that the group has been able to translate their fundamental understanding of the challenges around ageing to different settings around the world, building upon each other's knowledge. The theme of sharing knowledge and support was equally important for the Librarians' Contact Group in their work on benchmarking, and the ongoing discussion of the evolving role of libraries that was intensified by COVID-19.

Professor Kamal Munir (University of Cambridge) and Professor Henrik Wegener (University of Copenhagen) reflected on the monumental changes to working and teaching practices precipitated by the pandemic. They opened up a discussion with the Presidents on the challenges of maintaining cohesion in teams and quantifying the effect on research productivity, work culture and recruitment. The need to transform, and not merely transfer, pedagogy in a digital context emerged as a crucial concern for many IARU members.

The Presidents were delighted to endorse the proposal of Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng and UCT taking on the roles of IARU Chair and Secretariat in 2023. In other business matters, it was decided that a working group should be formed to explore the possibility of inviting a university from Latin America to join IARU, to diversify the geographical reach of the alliance. Refinements were made to the proposal about how best to support IARU's education initiatives and the proposal to help a greater number of early career academics undertake collaborations with colleagues at other IARU universities.

We look forward to the next Presidents' Meeting, scheduled for January 2023 at ETH Zürich.