

Confirmed Outcomes of the IARU Senior Officers' Meeting, October 2021

19-20 October 2021

The meeting was held online across two separate groups on successive days to accommodate time zone differences. This document combines the discussion and decisions of both groups under each agenda item, unless otherwise indicated.

Opening and Welcome

The Cambridge Senior Officer and Meeting Chair, Dr Karen Kennedy, opened the 18th IARU Senior Officers' Meeting, and introduced the IARU Chair, Prof. Stephen Toope, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge.

Prof. Toope welcomed everyone and acknowledged that while universities have begun to think about the post-pandemic future, the public health situation still varies enormously between countries, regions and cities. Prof. Toope also acknowledged that universities have also had their non-COVID challenges – noting in particular the serious fires at UCT in April and the inspiring response from the UCT community and universities around the world.

Prof. Toope thanked members for their engagement with the Secretariat as it has developed the proposals to be discussed today. In closing, Prof. Toope expressed hope that more in-person working would be possible in 2022 and pointed out one particularly promising finding of the Secretariat's survey: that members recognise the distinct value of IARU as a small, productive, and impressively global community with strong relationships based on trust.

Session 1: Senior Officers' Updates

Karen Kennedy welcomed everyone and introduced the Cambridge Secretariat team and new members, before providing Cambridge's institutional update.

Each Senior Officer in turn provided an update. Updates typically include major staff changes, recent challenges, and new strategies and initiatives put in place – particularly as a result of COVID-19 measures, socio-economic and political developments, and strategies regarding education and research.

The SOs' updates are, in principle, kept confidential. Therefore, there are no published outcomes.

Session 2: Discussion

2.1 Reflecting on Re-opening

Dr Karen Kennedy (CAM) introduced the discussion, asking what IARU members had learnt from COVID, and what they could learn from each other and share as best practice. The discussion was based around two questions:

- (1) 'What are the most valuable lessons your university has learnt so far about re-opening?'
- (2) 'Just how different do you think the long-term 'new normal' will be?'

GROUP 1

Anders Hagström (ETH) commented that ETH had returned to full in-person teaching in the Autumn, with vaccination certification, testing and mask wearing required. Some other universities introduced a 3-day on-campus schedule, but ETH deemed this too complex and there was consensus that ETH's research and lab-work meant it had to continue to be a university of in-person presence. The semester saw some protests in Switzerland, and at ETH, over COVID certification. ETH has been comprehensively examining how it will work post-pandemic. Faculty have long experience with using technology in their teaching, and recent experience has enhanced this and allowed ETH to think about optimising the mode of teaching for each educational offer. Getting the balance between online and in-person right is a challenge, involving study ability, space, logistics and coordination. New opportunities are being pursued in out-reach, and the reduction in carbon emissions from reduced travel is welcome. An important, pandemic-induced trend is towards a 'new-regionalism', seen in renewed travel within Europe but not outside. This trend is intensified by geopolitical factors, such as increasing competition between some countries.

Jürg Brunnschweiler (ETH) added that, with old buildings, it had been difficult to comply with government requirements around flexible working and desk-sharing. Jürg observed that the expanded scope for flexible, hybrid working is generally a good thing, but also an opportunity to organise and structure work days to adapt as effectively as possible to the 'new normal'.

Stephen Toope (CAM – IARU Chair) expressed his interest in people's experience of the proportion of staff who were comfortable returning to office work and those who were not, and how this was managed. Prof. Toope noted that, in Cambridge, there was a spectrum of reactions to re-opening. Some colleagues, both academic and professional, were now re-engaging after initial hesitation. Those with longer commutes and young children were typically more hesitant.

Jürg Brunnschweiler (ETH) said that about 10% of the ETH team wished to be fully remote. Now that it is clear that any office working will not always be 100% safe, others are reassessing their decision to work from home. Most colleagues and students enjoy being back, but the university is working with those who are uncomfortable with the new COVID protocols.

Hiro Furuya (UTOK) noted that a 2020 staff questionnaire found about 50% of staff were content with home working, the main reason being long commutes (two-hour round trips not uncommon).

Sally Wheeler (ANU): Almost all students wanted to return to in-person, leading ANU to intensify commitment to the campus experience. After two complete closures, operating online has been a learning curve and a challenge, and the future will not be hybrid. Among the key lessons from the closures was the importance of communication: bringing in a retired Vice-Marshall for briefings and updates provided confidence and clarity.

Stephen Toope (CAM – IARU Chair) posed two questions of members: (1) what does it mean to be a global alliance in light of current trends towards regionalism, even nationalism, and (2) what is IARU's role in addressing this and how should it be dealt with operationally? Prof. Toope also pointed out the need to balance, going forward, positives like reduced carbon footprints with the sense of global connection that IARU, as an organisation, generates and requires.

Jonathan Dampney (ANU) observed international collaboration has been vital during the pandemic, and there is a story to be told here about its value, especially when some see universities as self-interested.

Kiichi Fujiwara (UTOK) suggested that collaboration itself is infused with nationalism versus internationalism. There have, for example, been geopolitical tensions between China and Japan, and South Korea and Japan.

Kiichi also described the serious educational impact of the pandemic, saying that while UTokyo has a well-established international programme, when studying online students are less engaged and are dropping out, and that the damage to the international programme might be lasting. Second-year students were, for example, less engaged with peers and instructors. As a result, there is an urgent need to recover and encourage networking, engagement and dialogue.

GROUP 2:

Don Filer (YALE) noted that again, a major theme was the return to campus and modes of working. Yale is currently asking what worked and what, consequently, do we want to keep? Academically, there has been a major realisation that there needs to be a much greater use of technology in classrooms (now that people are much more familiar with it), building on the work and online courses of the existing teaching and learning centre.

Experimentation in language instruction has been especially important. Yale's partnership with Columbia and Cornell has seen the sharing of teaching expertise in less common languages across universities, to reduce competition for teachers and increase provision. Yale has also shifted to four teaching days a week, with the fifth day focused on virtual exercises and activities.

Regarding the political environment, American politics is perhaps more stable than in the recent past, but politics is divisive and government is divided. Universities are having to think about the increased difficulty Chinese citizens face in coming to study in the US and the way to develop new ways of working with partners in China in light of government measures. Governments in general are placing more restrictions on international collaboration and this may be the 'new normal'. In response, lobbying and supporting colleagues are required, without pulling back from fundamental research collaborations.

Also detectable is a big change in attitudes to climate, seen in both research and public discourse, with individuals increasingly questioning the need to travel. This greater awareness leads to tension between sustainability and connectivity, with people weighing up pros and cons and looking at other options.

Ed Nash (OXF) also noted the existence of general cynicism and questioning of experts. This relates to a major ongoing issue at Oxford: striking a balance between freedom of speech/academic expression and ensuring students do not feel harassed or unsafe. Ed said that he would be interested to hear from UCPH if the Danish experience was similar and if they had any insights to share. Prof. Toope also noted his interest in the UCPH and UCT perspective on this topic, which in the US and UK has become part of the 'culture wars'.

Jette Nielsen (UCPH) replied that there has been a long-standing conversation about free speech in Danish academia which varies in intensity. The issue currently generating most attention is the Danish government's intention to get people to relocate away from universities in Copenhagen to other regions.

Carolyn Newton (UCT) said that attention is also given to academic free speech at UCT, with an Academic Freedom Committee. The committee, in the past, has invited sometimes challenging speakers that have sparked interesting discussions.

More generally, Carolyn explained that UCT is working online and that in-person teaching will resume in 2022. Lecturers would be required to have a back-up version of teaching materials, to be ready to revert to online if needs be. A vaccine mandate has, in principle, been approved for next year. UCT was already expecting, and so is prepared for, blended/hybrid learning, with home-working also encouraged to save space on campus.

James Ford (UCB): most faculty and graduate students are very happy to be back on campus, research was progressing well. Mask mandates have been in place, with the disabled students programme working hard on making accommodations for students (e.g. the hearing impaired) that have experienced problems due to these mandates. The Delta COVID variant had stalled some reopening momentum. As a whole, the pandemic has intensified UCB's commitment to on-campus experience and showed that some technologies could be brought into the classroom and work well. Flexible working has aided staff recruitment and retention (given expense of the Bay Area). Of course, this has also given rise to a divide between more on-campus staff (e.g. student-facing) and more off-campus staff (e.g. financial planning etc.), which the university is addressing.

Karen Kennedy (CAM) said that a Cambridge priority was to keep key research activities and facilities open. Wider re-opening presented many challenges, especially around older buildings. The pandemic expedited Cambridge's online plan (cf. the new online professional courses of 'Cambridge Advance'), and one positive outcome has been more attention on sustainable travel. Cambridge's 'unique selling point' is defined around in-person teaching. It has been a challenge to preserve this, and there is ongoing work on how to deliver education, encourage teams back to the workplace, and how to work most effectively.

Karen then closed by noting key common insights that members had shared:

- Effective communication was critical
- Universities developed the ability to shut-down and re-open buildings
- Online teaching was necessary, and all universities are now grappling with how to set the in-person vs online balance in future. For institutions prioritising in-person teaching, the rise of online presents a longer-term challenge.
- Hybrid working has become the norm – with homeworking the norm for many. Challenges exist around maintaining team cohesion, and loss of opportunities for longer, informal conversations.
- It has been challenging to encourage some back (those with commutes, young children), and to work out how to use in-person time most effectively.
- Inevitable IT problems
- Positive outcomes include: events becoming more accessible, more frequent communication between colleagues, the creation of new initiatives and policies, re-thinking how local, regional and global collaborations are approached (esp. in terms of travel).
- The need for international collaboration is stronger than ever

Karen suggested that Prof. Toope's earlier questions (see above, 'Group 1') around what it means to be a global university and a global alliance in a post-pandemic world, in light of concerns around growing division and also sustainability, could be addressed in detail at the Presidents' Meeting. It was also suggested that it could be beneficial to provide some of this information around the return to the workplace to IARU HR departments in the interests of sharing lessons and good practice.

2.2 Secretariat's Proposals

Karen Kennedy explained that since becoming Chair, Cambridge has taken the opportunity to reflect on what IARU had achieved and where it might go in the future. The Secretariat, after consultations, developed 6 proposals (page 9 in the Tome) to help IARU work more effectively and deliver more value. Some are quick-wins and others perhaps need further thought and discussion. Karen briefly introduced each proposal in turn and members were asked for any comments and whether they were generally supportive.

[Note: on 19 October, Renata Schaeffer (CAM) had to leave to the meeting at this point]

Proposal 1: Create an online IARU Newsletter

The newsletter would improve communications both within IARU (avoiding a sense of working in 'siloes') by sharing information more horizontally with various groups and organisations. The intention is for it to be relatively light-touch in terms of workload, anticipating 2-3 publications a year. Each newsletter would summarise group news and cascade decisions from meetings.

Anders Hagström (ETH) wondered if there would be enough news to circulate within such a closed group, and whether non-IARU-specific content might also be required.

Sally Wheeler (ANU) suggested the reverse, that there would be too much news, and cautioned against it being excessive and potentially confusing (not to mention a lot of work). Sally suggested no more than 2 issues a year.

In response, Karen Kennedy noted that further thought and discussion will be given to exact content, and the Secretariat is mindful of the need not to overwhelm members. 2-3 times a year sounds like the right number of issues.

Both groups were supportive of the proposal as a good potential way of improving communication.

Proposal 2: Raise IARU's Profile in Our Universities

In addition to the proposed newsletter, IARU's website would be updated and social media used more often. Greater awareness of IARU's work and value would strengthen the case members could make for additional internal resources to support greater participation. Members would be encouraged to share relevant news items between groups and key contacts, and between key contacts and the Secretariat.

Jonathan Dampney (ANU): interested to know what members are currently doing to promote IARU internally. ANU is currently developing a new intranet site platforming international engagement. Sally Wheeler added that at one point, ANU actually had an airport billboard advertising its IARU membership.

Carolyn Newton (UCT) pointed out that material written for the newsletter could also be shared on social media, to avoid duplication of work. Clarity over intended audiences is needed.

Ashley Spinelli (UCB) suggested that simply making it easier to find key contacts on the website would be very helpful, even if just names and departments.

In response, Karen Kennedy highlighted that efficiency would be uppermost on the mind of Secretariat colleagues, with the need to avoid both duplication and the loss of existing routes of communication.

Both groups were supportive of the proposal.

Proposal 3: Create Guidance for Groups - A IARU Handbook

A common source of guidance for good group practice (i.e. forming, running, evaluating a group) would save colleagues time and effort, avoid 'wheel reinvention' and enhance continuity. It would not be narrowly prescriptive or directive, but it would make clear general expectations of each kind of group (e.g. working group versus network etc.).

Anders Hagstöm (ETH) suggested rather than a whole booklet, a few pages would probably suffice ('less is more'). Jonathan Dampney (ANU) noted that in light of staff turnover, guidance for new members would be welcome. Kiichi Fujiwara (UTOK) welcomed the idea as a way of enhancing communication between groups and Secretariat. Hongwei Xia (PKU) was also supportive, suggesting that in future a discussion could be held about benchmarking, setting out IARU's collective expectations. Carolyn Newton (UCT) believed this was needed because in the past groups had functioned a little in the dark.

In response, Karen Kennedy noted that work would be needed to match expectations to different types of groups, and that this proposal, like those before it, would be kept proportionate.

Both groups were supportive of the proposal.

Proposal 4: Improve the Coordination of Education Initiatives

There is no single point of coordination for IARU's current education initiatives, and the Secretariat is not well-equipped to provide this long-term. It was proposed that a new committee, comprised of colleagues with professional experience in joint education, would be formed to support members on the ground as a source of communication and institutional memory, to tackle common problems, and generate ideas. Further discussions would have to include the terms of reference, who would be on the committee, as well as its exact role and remit.

Jette Nielsen (UCPH) said that UCPH would be keen to lead on this initiative, depending on the other members and whether they would like to put resources into it as well. Don Filer (YALE) liked the idea of trying to focus the conversation in what was a very large landscape.

Both groups were supportive of the proposal

Proposal 5: Create a Case Study of the ALH Group

The Secretariat would work with the Ageing, Longevity & Health (ALH) group (IARU's most successful, and currently only research-focused group) – to produce a study of the group's history, successes and challenges, in order to generate lessons for future research groups, and for IARU as a whole in promoting research collaboration. The work would be an extension of the Handbook under Proposal 3. It would not be too significant a piece of work, and recognise that a huge amount of bottom-up research activity already happens amongst IARU universities.

Robert Sing (CAM) added that the ALH has already been consulted about this proposal and were very supportive.

More broadly, IARU members were asked whether they thought that they should have more research-focused collaborations, in light of IARU's commitment '*to work together to address the most pressing global challenges of our time*'.

In practice, Proposal 5 was discussed in concert with Proposal 6 (which received most attention). Both proposals were also considered in terms of the broader question of IARU's general approach to research. See Proposal 6 for further discussion.

Both groups were supportive of the proposal.

Proposal 6: Foster New Research Collaborations

Currently, IARU is doing little to encourage research collaborations. Recognising the difficulties of setting up new (especially inter-disciplinary) research collaborations, it was proposed that IARU would offer 1-2 years of support (up to \$5,000 per annum) for researchers to connect, meet, and develop new projects that would thereafter go on to seek external funding, offering up to US\$5,000 for up to two new collaborations per year. Karen Kennedy acknowledged that this proposal would be challenging for some members.

GROUP 1

Jürg Brunnschweiler (ETH) was sceptical about the proposals. Previous efforts had been made in this area, but in truth researchers already know each other, and do a lot without IARU's help. The proposal would commit too much (both in time and money) for too little return. The Secretariat should probably prioritise certain other proposals (Proposals 1-3), given limited resources and time, over this one and probably over Proposals 4-5 on the basis of input versus likely return. Better communication in itself would lead to more collaboration.

Sally Wheeler (ANU) shared Jürg's concerns, and suggested other potential ways of assisting collaboration: focusing on early-career researchers, research affected by the pandemic, assistance for publication production, assistance in paying fees, COVID-related research etc.

Stephen Toope (CAM – IARU Chair) recognised these concerns, accepting that the scale of the funding made potential results uncertain. Prof. Toope instead suggested focusing on better supporting existing research collaborations connected with groups, and then encouraging early-career researchers to be part of those collaborations.

GROUP 2

Ed Nash (OXF) backed the idea, and more widely commented that more clarity was needed in IARU about its aims vis-à-vis research. Based on Oxford's experience, Ed suggested that IARU had been most successful in facilitating research links, rather than developing new research collaborations (e.g. creation of research internships for doctoral students in very specific research areas, to benefit from different/greater institutional resources). There are already well-established alternative schemes for nurturing research consortia and programmes.

Don Filer (YALE) concurred, saying IARU should be focusing on ways to help researchers come together, and Yale does not support funding for research collaborations per se because it would be a poor use of resources (noting, for example, the difficulty in evaluating proposals). Don suggested that IARU would do better to look at projects and ask what could be done to help facilitate introductions and foster interactions, leaving researchers to actually seek funding elsewhere. He also believed that a more organised, more focused approach is needed to attract people, for example around specific themes such as Ethics and AI.

Ed Nash (OXF) recalled that there had been similar work done in the past with the Global Transformation Group. It is important to have either a graduate student element, or quite a narrow focus, or for the discussion to centre on helping universities deliver and administer initiatives rather than trying to seed them. Oxford, for its part, is increasingly scaling back administration and emphasising the need to empower staff to make their own decisions.

Carolyn Newton (UCT) also had reservations, given that academics tend to be adverse to any top-down imposition, and arguing that project funding is hard to access, not seed funding. Carolyn agreed with Ed that it would be valuable if IARU could help bring postgraduate students together around specific research themes (which would itself foster collaboration).

Ashley Spinelli (UCB) echoed concerns about departing from a bottom-up, faculty-driven research model, saying that anything perceived as coming from the centre would meet with resistance and not take off. However, a way of spreading awareness of areas of shared research interest would be beneficial (maybe just working groups on very specific areas e.g. data science) – that sort of information sharing had proved useful in the past.

In summary, Karen Kennedy acknowledged that the proposal in its current form lacked support. The Secretariat would, therefore, rethink it – particularly in terms of what could be done to engage early-career researchers and whether specific themes could be focused on which are of interest to IARU members. More thought would also need to be given to how any sort of application process would work.

Karen thanked all members for their input, saying that some proposals were quick wins (Proposals 1–3, 5) and that they had been endorsed, whereas other, more involved proposals, would be revised (Proposals 4 and 6). The Secretariat was grateful for Jette Nielsen's offer of assistance with Proposal 4, and will engage with UCPH after the meeting.

[Note: at this point Prof. Stephen Toope, as planned, left both meetings]

Session 3: Global Education Initiatives and Institutional Joint Working

All group and initiative reports were made by Dr Robert Sing of the Secretariat. Due to time constraints, discussion focused on budget requests for 2022. Groups were considered in the following order: new budget requests, carry over requests, and groups making no requests.

3.1 Secretariat Costs

The Secretariat made the standard request as in previous years to fund the Secretariat's costs, the Presidents' Meeting and the Senior Officers' Meeting. It was hoped that both meetings would be in-person in 2022.

3.2 The Global Internship Programme

As in previous years, a request of US\$22,000 was made (US\$2,000 per member university). The programme continues to be impacted by COVID. Travel restrictions had no doubt deterred some from applying, and in some cases had delayed people taking up their internship (as is the case with UTokyo). Oxford transferred its internship online. The student feedback from the virtual internships had been very positive.

It was hoped that next year would see improved international travel, enabling greater take up of exchange opportunities, and an expansion of the programme. Oxford and Copenhagen had already informally expressed interest for next year.

3.3 New Funding Requests

3.3.1 Ageing, Longevity and Health

Requested US\$15,000 for their annual research conference, as in previous years. The 2021 conference was held online the week before the Senior Officers' Meeting, and the organisers were very happy with what was achieved. A report on the conference would be circulated after the meeting.

3.3.2 The Global Transformation Group

The group requested US\$13,500 for next year (US\$10,000 for the Borderlands' Field Course in Chiang Mai University, Thailand, with the remainder going to the group meeting).

This request had previously been approved for 2020. The funds were, however, not used due to COVID and they were not carried over to 2021. The request was therefore presented as a new request to the Senior Officers.

The Global Transformation Group was hopeful that they would be able to run the course in 2022, though it would remain contingent on the international situation.

3.3.3 The Virtual Museum Tours Initiative

Peking University requested US\$14,200 for 2022. This would fund three planned projects at three universities: Oxford, Peking, and Tokyo. The University of Tokyo also joined the programme for 2021, a development that occurred too late to be included in the Tome.

While Peking had made progress in its planned programmes this year, COVID had again affected what NUS, ETHZ and UCPH had been able to do. It is likely, therefore, that the Secretariat will ask Senior Officers to approve funding carryovers for these universities in the coming weeks.

Anders Hagström (ETH) expressed thanks to Peking for this initiative, saying it was a great example of a creative response to the current situation.

3.3.4 The Sustainable Campus Initiative

Requested US\$45,000. \$15,000 of this was a new request, for a joint project with the Real Estate Working Group. The rest of the funds were unused and carried over from projects originally planned for 2021.

3.2 Carryover Funding Requests

The following groups only requested that the funds allocated to them for 2021, which were not used because of pandemic-related disruption, be carried over to 2022:

- The Real Estate Working Group
- Librarians' Contact Group
- Cybersecurity Forum
- Gender Group

3.3 Groups not making any funding requests

3.3.1 IARU Courses

As stated in the Tome, the Secretariat was holding \$2,500 on behalf of both UCPH and UCT, which was left over from the Santander-sponsored Global Summer Exchange Programme, which ended in 2018. Santander had recently confirmed that IARU is free to use these funds as it wishes. The Secretariat proposed that these funds remain with UCPH and UCT to be used to support general student exchange between IARU universities, as they saw fit.

The proposal was approved.

Other Groups not making any budget request for 2022:

- IARU Joint Online Courses
- Novo Nordisk International Talent Program
- Alumni Associations Network
- HR Consultation Group
- Lifelong Learning

Karen Kennedy pointed out that in future IARU needed to think more holistically about the current groups and general expectations about their work. IARU's bank balance is very healthy at present, but this is largely due to a lack of in-person group meetings and events. Once groups become more active and expenditure returns to more normal levels, IARU will have to consider what it funds, as it will no longer be able to meet all funding requests.

Robert Sing (CAM) added that it was important not to equate a lack of budget request from some groups with a lack of activity, since some groups were focused more on networking and good practice sharing than working jointly on specific projects. This, in turn, relates to the question under Proposal 3, of providing guidance to groups to help them function as effectively as possible.

Senior Officers approved all new requests and carryover requests.

Session 4: Business Matters

4.1 Financial Report 2021

The Report was presented by Robert Sing (CAM). There were no specific decisions required, but members were invited to share any comments or questions. Robert highlighted that IARU had a total of about \$559,000 available to spend in 2021, and expects to have around \$623,000 to spend in 2022 (after all membership dues have been paid in). The point, made earlier, was reiterated that this healthy surplus would be depleted in future with the resumption of international travel. The next Senior Officers' Meeting could therefore see greater discussion of what IARU wanted out of the groups, if the guidance (Proposal 3) that would be drafted was proving useful, and what was sustainable in the longer-term.

GROUP 1

Kiichi Fujiwara (UTOK) agreed that one of the key responsibilities of the Senior Officers was to maintain an oversight of the groups, and to evaluate their performance. It was important to remember not just that some groups were more active than others, but that groups are not meant to go on forever. A handbook (Proposal 3) would therefore be welcome.

Jonathan Dampney (ANU) concurred with the importance of reviewing the groups, while keeping in mind that their reasons for existing were different (i.e. some do not have specific goals).

Li Ling Koh (NUS) emphasised the previous point, agreeing that it was timely to have a handbook as a means to help groups (and Senior Officers) to assess their work and to know when they should finish their work. The leaders of groups are limited in their capacity to instigate changes and have found it difficult to reach consensus when significant change is needed. Having an external source of guidance to appeal to would help.

GROUP 2

Carolyn Newton (UCT) said it has been made clear that groups do not always need to meet in person every year, and so the handbook could encourage groups to perhaps meet every other year in the interests of reducing our collective carbon footprint.

In both meetings, Karen Kennedy summarised the discussion. It was agreed that IARU needs to consider the purpose of groups, and that there should be greater acceptance of the idea of 'task and finish' where appropriate, alongside a recognition of the need to allow networks/best practice-focused groups to remain where work was ongoing. It was agreed that the proposed guidance to groups should encompass topics like sustainability and the expense of international travel.

[Note: at this point in the first meeting, Prof. Reuben Wong (NUS) had to leave the meeting]

4.2 Senior Officers' Meeting 2022

This item, and item 4.3, were provided in the Tome mainly for Senior Officers' information, and key elements of both were outlined in the meeting by Robert Sing (CAM).

Oxford, pre-COVID, had been agreed as the host of the next Senior Officers' Meeting. Oxford had been informally approached about hosting the next Senior Officers' Meeting in Sept-Oct 2022 and, subject to travel and meeting restrictions, Oxford had provisionally accepted.

Senior Officers affirmed that Oxford would host SOM 2022.

4.3 Presidents' Meeting 2022

Robert Sing (CAM) reported that the Secretariat had confirmed dates for a virtual Presidents' Meeting in April 2022 and an in-person Presidents' Meeting in May 2022. The first preference would be to hold an in-person meeting. The Secretariat suggested that the in-person meeting should be hosted in Cambridge so that, in the event of COVID-related disruption or cancellation, the Secretariat, rather than another IARU member, would have the responsibility of making alternative arrangements and bearing associated costs. This suggestion had been accepted by the Presidents and Senior Officers. The Secretariat would monitor the situation and decide in the New Year whether they would continue to plan for an in-person meeting in the first instance.

Carolyn Newton (UCT) recalled that aligning the SOM with the Presidents' Meeting had been discussed in the past, because it would save time and travel costs. Carolyn suggested that the conversation around this could be resumed next year.

Don Filer (Yale) remembered this conversation, noting that one downside is that members would not see each other in between meetings if they were combined. Don suggested that if the meetings were combined, it would be important to retain some Senior Officer-only discussions and some Presidents-only discussions.

Robert Sing (CAM) noted that this year it had not been possible to tie the Presidents' Meeting with the WEF Davos meeting, as had been agreed would happen every second year. On this, both Don Filer and Renata Schaeffer (CAM) added that WEF was, in any case, limiting its invite list this year.

4.4 IARU Chair

Karen Kennedy (CAM – Meeting Chair) introduced the item, soliciting members' opinions about how IARU should respond operationally to Prof. Toope's planned departure from Cambridge at the end of September 2022 (six months earlier than the end of Cambridge's term as IARU Chair). Members' opinions would then be shared with the Presidents, who would make the final decision. Two potential solutions were outlined:

- 1) Cambridge's interim Vice-Chancellor would serve as IARU Chair. The Secretariat would continue.
- 2) The Secretariat would begin to look for a new IARU Chair (and Secretariat) with a view to handing over at the end of September 2022.

The advantages and disadvantages of each option were briefly outlined.

Jürg Brunnschweiler (ETH) favoured Option 1 with Option 2 as a fallback. Don Filer (YALE) believed it was fundamentally an internal Cambridge question, but raised the possibility that an interim VC may be unwilling to act as Chair. Carolyn Newton (UCT) noted that there would, however, be relatively little extensive work for an interim VC to do as Chair.

Senior Officers were of no single, clear opinion. There was, however, a sense that what was operationally easiest for Cambridge was an important consideration.

5. Wrap-up

Karen Kennedy concluded the meeting by thanking all attendees for their contributions and, in some cases, joining outside normal business hours. It was suggested that, if a similar meeting is still required in future, new modes of discussion might be trialed (e.g. break-out rooms). Members were encouraged to suggest any possible themes or topics for discussion at the Presidents' Meeting, about which the Secretariat would be in touch.

The meetings were closed