

IARU SENIOR OFFICERS' MEETING SUMMARY

11-13 September 2023, hosted by the Australian National University

The Senior Officers exchanged updates and news from their institutions, with a more detailed follow-up discussion picking up on the emerging themes and common ground. Some universities reported that they were seeing changes in demographics of their international student body and the subject of employing graduate students was also discussed. It was notable that many institutions would be welcoming new Presidents over the next year, with six new leaders expected at the next IARU Presidents' Meeting.

The Secretariat reported that after a challenging few years, participation in the Global Internship Program (GIP) and IARU Courses was increasing again. The direction of the Education Committee was considered and the Senior Officers felt that it would be useful for the Committee to review the GIP and, in the longer term, plan to seek external funding for the IARU Courses. Many Senior Officers felt that education programmes were important for IARU and articulating the unique strengths of IARU would be an essential part of successfully pursuing external funding.

The Senior Officers were joined by the ANU group leads from two of the IARU working groups. Professor Jochen Prantl and Dr Beatrice Bijon presented an update from the Global Transformation Group, highlighting the value of the Borderlands field course in a short film of the participating students. Ms Roxanne Missingham updated Senior Officers on the work of the Librarian's Contact Group and their new staff exchange scheme. The funding requests and status reports from all IARU working groups were reviewed and it was notable that the groups are increasingly meeting in person again. The Secretariat commented that improved guidance on funding requests would help groups in planning their activities and also be beneficial for IARU in its financial projections.

A session on student mental health and wellbeing was led by Dr James Brann (Head of Student Experience, ANU), with Senior Officers exploring the idea of establishing a IARU working group on the topic, to share best practice, knowledge and experience. The subject of student mental health is a key concern for many universities and was discussed at the Presidents' Meeting earlier in 2023. It is hoped that the proposed working group will be a practical way of taking that conversation forward.

In 2024, IARU will trial combining the Presidents' and Senior Officers' Meeting, with the intention to maximise the benefit of having both groups together, while making international travel as efficient and sustainable as possible. The proposed structure would balance the need to handle IARU business matters as well as provide valuable strategic discussion topics and unstructured discussion time for the Presidents. As there will be so many new Presidents at the meeting, this will give them the opportunity to get to know each other, talk about their priorities and challenges, and become familiar with IARU. It was noted that the joint meeting will increase the workload for the Secretariat and that this new structure should be evaluated afterwards.

The Secretariat presented the financial report, highlighting the need for better guidance and more standardisation of meeting costs across the working groups. As there have been some delays to the transfer of funds between the Secretariat teams, the call for membership fees has not yet been issued, but it is hoped this will happen soon.

The meeting ended with a presentation from Ms Renata Schaeffer (Cambridge) on navigating international research collaboration in an increasingly complex global research landscape. The Senior Officers compared the challenges of foreign interference and how universities formulated policies on

international research collaboration. The outcome was to focus on how IARU members can help and learn from each other in this area, and how it can be done systemically.

To close the meeting, the Secretariat raised several additional business matters. The proposal for IARU support for participation in ETH's Cybathlon event was approved by Senior Officers. It was decided that although there would always be a preference for in-person attendance, IARU should continue to run hybrid meetings for practical reasons.

The merits of a permanent Secretariat team, rather than having the responsibilities rotating between members, were debated. It was felt that the financial and resource implications of a permanent team were prohibitive. Additionally, there were also benefits in each IARU university undertaking Secretariat duties as it increased the familiarity and understanding of the Alliance for members, while bringing fresh perspectives to the tasks.