

10 May 2018

REPORT TO THE WUN PARTNERSHIP BOARD FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PROFESSOR JOHN HEARN

Summary 2017-18. After the fundamental review of all WUN activities in 2016-17, this reporting period has seen a continuing strengthening of WUN research programs, productivity and funding success, with alignment of each Global Challenge Group to the relevant SDGs and other global policy frameworks. As recommended by the Board in New York in 2017, the cross-cutting themes of Economics and Big Data are built into the four Global Challenge Groups, while the Global China Group and the Global Africa Group perform as enabling support groups for WUN-wide engagement with those continents. A Global Policy Research Group has developed rapidly to support a focussed engagement of the Global Challenge research programs with international policy development. A lot of work has been completed in exploring the expansion of WUN Postgraduate and ECR Mobility, alongside a further expansion into Undergraduate Research Student mobility, which could be a new and strong binding force for WUN Partners. We are delighted to welcome our new Partnership Board Chair, Professor Martin Paul, and new member University College Dublin to the WUN Network, now totalling a record 23 members (see below). During the year the Board Steering Group carried out an extensive search for new Executive Director to replace John Hearn, who completes his service after 9 years in July 31 2018. A smooth transition is carefully planned and ensured to the new Executive Director and Secretariat.

1. WUN Conference and AGM 2018. The Partnership Board asked to focus in the annual face to face Board meeting on key strategic discussions concerning the future development of WUN, reducing time spent on management and operational matters, which can be handled through the year by the Board Steering Group and the Executive Director. Consequently we have allocated the time to a few key strategic issues, while a number of other matters are listed in this report for note.

Note 1: The 2018 meetings were transferred from Beijing to Perth due to new regulations in China. We are grateful to President Dawn Freshwater and her team who worked well with WUN Secretariat to implement.

2. WUN Conference and AGM 2019. The Board steering group proposes that these meetings are held in the UK. Considerations of time and cost encourage a venue for workshops and governance meetings at one or more UK member campuses; and the Presidents Forum to be held in London in order to facilitate participation from government, international funding agencies and major NGOs. While the UK government will be engaged in the launch of BREXIT, the UK will also be developing strong global partners. In addition the UK is currently maintaining its foreign development spend at 0.7 GDP through its relevant agencies, with the Global Challenge Research Fund, Newton Fund and other instruments in education and research.

3. WUN Reference Documents Bank. Note 2: I draw your attention to this reference bank, which is designed to brief and inform all WUN colleagues on the current platform and status of WUN initiatives. The bank is easy to access and user friendly. The WUN website is also replete with up to date information on all knowledge partnerships, policy documents, the 88 WUN program teams world-wide, and the future directions approved by the Board. This data base can reduce the large number of enquiries to Secretariat.

4. Development of WUN Strategic Plan 2018-20. The outcomes of the WUN meetings in New York are the basis of the adjusted WUN Strategic Plan, for consideration and approval in Perth. In fact, the new strategic directions have required only minor edits and inclusion of innovative additions to the earlier Strategic Plan 2016-18. The Strategic Plan is kept to two pages, and is included in the WUN Annual Report for continuity.

6. WUN Membership. We welcome University College Dublin, Ireland's Global University; Tec de Monterrey, and the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil. WUN membership now stands at a record 23 members. The Board determined earlier that membership should not go beyond 25, so that the complex linkages of research and education have time to develop. Renmin University of China, National Cheng Kung

University of Taiwan, and the University of Nairobi joined in 2016-17. As we approach the Conference, we have an expression of interest from the University of Pretoria – a leader in Africa.

Note 3: There is inevitable turnover of a minority of our membership with new Presidents and their strategies, priorities and engagement. While some of this appears inane and egotistic, it is a Trumpian characteristic of our time and takes a great deal of energy and time from the Executive Director and Board. The Board may invite a new Membership strategy paper, to raise the membership ceiling to 30. We could certainly strengthen with 2 new members from Asia (Japan/Korea/Thai); 2 new from Europe (South and East); 2 from America (mid-west and west coast) and one more each (because of size of their continents) from Chile, Pacific (Hawaii/Fiji). Of course, new members would meet criteria (approved earlier).

7. WUN Criteria for Success. I repeat this item from my report in 2017, as it is vital to WUN success. There is a growing list of Interdisciplinary Research Groups that, while initiated in part by WUN, have now grown and become independently autonomous and sustainable. A few examples are the **Critical Zones Consortium** (Prof Steve Banwart); the **INFLAME** Inflammatory Diseases Group (Prof Susan Prescott); the Life Course Approach to **Non Communicable Disease** (Prof Mark Hanson); the **OPERA** Pregnancy Risk Program (Prof David Olson); the **Global Farm Platforms Program** (Professor Mark Eisler); and the **Migration Research Program** (Ann Singleton). WUN does not claim these successes, although each of them were stimulated and catalysed by the WUN Research Development Fund. In the course of our review of WUN it emerges that the criteria for success include (i) Strong and enduring **leadership**; (ii) a committed team and **scholarly community**; (iii) linkage with a relevant **international agency**; (iv) engagement with the major **international society** in the field; (v) strong support from their **home university**; and (vi) focus on **outcomes, impact and sustainable resources**. Other WUN IRGs are well along this trajectory for the future. These criteria give some guidelines and insights for the further development of WUN.

8. WUN Sustainability Fund. This fund was established in 2013-15 with extra subscriptions of £10K per annum, in order to develop competitive bids for resources that would make the WUN group sustainable (as in paragraph 7 above). In the current financial year, the fund has supported three major teams and programs (i) Professor Loretta Baldessar (UWA), \$AUD 25K for the “Social Care Approach to Ageing”; (ii) Professor Cecilia Svanes (Bergen), £ 30K for Helminths in the global allergy epidemic; and (iii) Professor David Olsen (Alberta), £20K for “Optimal Pregnancy Environment Risk Assessment”. Reviewers considered these applications to have high probability of attracting major funding towards sustainability. After these expenditures and at the start of financial year 2018-19, the fund holds £165K for future investment.

9. Budget and Subscription. We have managed the budget very carefully and will have a small surplus and carry over into financial year 2018-19. The projected budget does not include any expenditure required for a new undergraduate mobility program. In its first year, I suggest the Postgraduate mobility model be applied, supported through participating Universities, and any central Secretariat cost be kept minimal. The projected budget has included a modest expansion of Secretariat to deal with the bigger membership.

10. Thanks. I am grateful to all those who have given their time, energy and expertise to WUN over the past nine years of my tenure as Executive Director. In visiting our member universities and meeting many of the researchers who engage in WUN programs, I am constantly impressed (and amazed) at the enthusiasm for WUN and good will of our colleagues. I thank all those who are faithful participants (at any time of day or night) in the WUN Steering Group teleconferences, between the annual Conferences and AGM, who make sure that business is proceeding well. The governance meetings with the Partnership Board (and seven Chairs during my term), AAG, Global Challenge Groups and Coordinators are essential in monitoring and implementation. The Coordinators are extraordinary in their dedication and hard work. Especially, I thank my colleagues in the Secretariat, Dr Mike Hasenmueller, A-Prof Grace Liu and Marije Nieuwenhuis in Sydney and Helena Smith, Dawn Thompson, Marcin Sanocki and Diane Allinson in Leeds, for their smart and tireless teamwork and efficiency. It is a privilege to help lead such a worthwhile group of people around the world, in such a worthwhile program of activities.

