**CORPORATION OF SIR GEORGE MONOUX COLLEGE**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the External Relations Committee held on**

**3 March 2020**

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| **Present** | Stewart Maclean (Chair), Talia Chirouf, Tom Foakes, Farhana Juhera, Maurine Lewin, David Vasse. |
| **In Attendance** | James Gould (Vice-Principal: Student Services and Recruitment). |

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| **1** | **Apologies for Absence & Quoracy**  All members were present.  Robert Smith, Clerk to the Corporation, was unable to be in attendance. Minutes of the meeting, within a framework provided by the Clerk, were taken by the Chair of the Committee. |
| **2** | **Declarations of Interest**  None. |
| **3** | **Draft Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Ordinary Business): 11 November 2019**  It was noted that the draft minutes had been approved by the Chair of the Committee for circulation.  The minutes were approved as a correct record of the business transacted, and *prima facie* evidence of the proceedings to which they relate. |
| **4** | **Matters Arising from the Draft Minutes (Ordinary Business): 11 November 2019**  None. |
| **5** | **Risk Management Report**  It was noted that the Board level risk falling within the remit of the Committee is considered under Agendum 6 below.  It was also noted that any other risks requiring the Audit Committee’s attention are to be identified in the course of the meeting and duly reported to the said committee. None were identified. |
| **6** | **Communications and Marketing, with Special Reference to Student Recruitment**  A report, together with a retrospective schematic diagram (2018-20) prepared by the Vice-Principal: Student Services and Recruitment, was received and considered.  It was reported that general improvements seen last year in school liaison, opportunities for potential students to visit the college, the general marketing of the college and how the interest of potential students is sustained have been maintained the current year.  The number of applications had been significantly above, and the number of offers below, the previous year (see bullet points below).  Whilst it is too early in the year to present a firm projection of numbers, an early indication suggests that 1,820 students will be enrolled for 2020-21, which would represent the College’s present maximum capacity.  In relation to the pattern of applications and offers, it was reported that: |

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|  | **.** | the Marketing Strategy for this academic year included an action to introduce a new, online application system, but that in December it was noticed that bugs in the previous, externally commissioned system had become worse, leading to a decision to advance the introduction of the in-house online application system; |
|  | **.** | the spike in January had therefore been due to the ease of the new system and re-applications from students who had tried (and failed) in December such that, whilst it is pleasing to see such a significant increase in applications, it should be treated with caution – as the relative ease of application may lead to an increase in students applying to the College who do not have a genuine interest in studying - the number of offers is still the key metric to track, and this is slightly below last year; |
|  | **.** | the relative decrease in offers compared to last year is something to monitor closely, but should not cause concern at this stage for the following reasons: |

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|  |  | **.** | some decrease in the application/offer percentage was expected due to the relative ease of the new system – the College is not far behind the equivalent number of offers last year despite having started its interview cycle slightly later; |
|  |  | **.** | the combination of a large spike in January applications, the incidence of an advice evening and a teachers’ strike meant that less students were invited for interview in February leading to a slight backlog of applicants; *and* |
|  |  | **.** | the above factors will also have contributed to the reduced application/offer percentage, as initial “no-shows” will not all have been re-invited in - whilst this must be closely monitored, it has been assumed that offers adhere closely to last year’s pattern for the purpose of a ‘best guess’ forecast. |

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|  | **.** | current projections, which should be treated with caution at this point of the year, suggest that: |

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|  |  | **.** | a low range model assuming a conservative 10% decrease in relation to offers (tracking the current position) and a decline in the high offer to enrolment percentage achieved last year (i.e. a partial reversal of the positive trend seen over the last 18 months) yields a total enrolment of 1,973 students (1,717 at the census date); |
|  |  | **.** | a best guess’ model assuming offers remain consistent with the last academic year and that the improvements in the offer to enrolment percentage achieved last year are sustained yields a total enrolment of 2,104 students (1,820 at the census date); |
|  |  | **.** | an upper range model tracking more closely to the upturn in applications experienced to date yields a total enrolment of 2,193 students (1,920 at the census date); *but* |
|  |  | **.** | the College is likely to set a maximum capacity of 1,820 students so as to manage growth effectively and therefore, if applications, offers and enrolments track the upper range model, would implement measures to set limits on recruitment (e.g. by further reducing the number of ‘walk-in’ applicants at enrolment). |

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|  | It was noted that the new application system consists of two stages - an initial brief application and a second fuller one. Following questions from governors, SLT accepted that some applicants in the year to date may be less committed to the College than if they had gone through the more onerous, second stage procedure. However, given that the College will be re-contacting first-stage applicants in connection with the second stage, this might secure greater levels of commitment, thereby helping to increase the reliability of recruitment projections.  The following questions from members received the responses shown:  *Why have fewer Gifted & Talented students attended assessment centres this year?*  Because of a slightly re-arranged timescale focusing on June taster sessions, and more students in general attending advice evenings – where high performing students are more likely to attend.    *How much information are students asked to complete on the new application form?*  Enough for the basics – Special Educational Needs, school (for a reference) and criminal convictions etc. Prospective students will also need to complete a second part prior to enrolment, which may require additional resourcing at enrolment.  *Will students be turned away after the 1,820 is met?*  1,820 is a target, and a cap for planning purposes. There is a quality imperative to closing enrolment early, but some flexibility will be retained for individual cases, such as newly arrived students.  *Is the College still facing challenges with some secondary schools?*  Yes, with some secondary schools who have sixth forms, although there is some very positive progress in the case of some schools who now see the College as a preferred local college partner.  It was also clarified that ‘69’ school events/fairs quoted in the report should read “54”. |

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| **7** | **Employer Links and Work Experience**  A dashboard format prepared by the Vice-Principal (Student Services and Recruitment) was received and considered.  Definitions of the following categories were noted: |

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|  | **.** | **Work Experience (WEX) Placements** - students based off-site with an external employer for at least five working days, engaged in work relevant to their pathway, study programme or career aspirations. |
|  | **.** | **Industry Placements** - vocational students based off-site with an external employer for at least forty-five days, engaged in work relevant to their pathway, study programme or career aspirations. |
|  | **.** | **Work Experience (WEX) Projects** - students have exposure to the workplace or experience of work with an employer, in most instances delivered in partnership with the curriculum (i.e. students are involved as part of their course). |
|  | **.** | ***Talks and Workshops*** - one off talks/workshops from employers about their industry/careers/etc. |

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|  | College performance in the year-to-date concerning Work Experience (WEX) Placements and Industry Placements is shown below: |

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|  | **.** | **Work Experience (WEX) Placements** – there is high confidence in respect of all pathways apart from Science & Health (except for Health & Social Care) where confidence is only fair; |
|  | **.** | **Industry Placements** – this was reported to be an area of current focus, with a degree ofimprovement reported since November, but still requiring considerable focus. |

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|  | Governors expressed specific concern in relation to industry placements, not only because the target will increase next year to 30% of vocational students (up from 20%), but also because the College’s performance against this year's target, and questioned what the strategy is to achieve better outcomes, especially since funding is at risk if targets are not met.  In response, it was acknowledged that although the situation concerning the industry placement programme is common across many colleges, more significant progress must be made. Re-designing the timetable this year had not had the required impact and a different model is being considered for 2020-21 which makes more use of the College’s brokerage partners.  In addressing governor concerns over the longer-term strategy for employer links and their associated targets, it was stated that the Strategic Plan provides for the development of prestigious partnerships between specific pathways and relevant employers. In addition to the KPI’s for placements and projects, a target in the Strategic Plan is for each pathway to have a ‘prestigious partnership’ in place and operating by the end of the 2021-22 academic year.  In response to a question over the extent to which alumni had provided placements and funding, it was reported that the College had engaged with alumni more than in previous years, with two alumni weeks and a third planned for the Summer Term. However, as yet, there had not been an appetite from these alumni to provide placements although all want to return to deliver another talk. Longer term, and when resources permit, the College would like to invest in a facility enabling alumni to donate to a ‘Monoux Scholars’ programme.  Questioned over the long-term reliance on brokers for work placements, SLT indicated that it represents value for money at the moment, though there is an aspiration to eventually move away from brokerage, if possible. |

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| **8** | **Key Performance Indicators 2018-19 & 2019-20**  Where projections measures are valid at this point of the year, the following were reported: |

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|  | **Performance Indicators** | **Measure** | **2018-19**  **Outcome** | **2019-20 Target**  **%** | **Feb 20**  **Update** |
|  | External progression | % of students progressing successfully to their first choice of HE institution | 69% | 70% | - |
|  | External progression | % of students progressing to employment, apprenticeship and HE in a related sector. | 89% | 90% | - |
|  | External progression | % of students progressing to Russell group out of those who progressed to HE. | 14% | 15% | - |
|  | Work experience | % of L2 & L3 Voc. students undertaking work experience. | 56% | 80% | 49% (current) |
|  | Student feedback | % of students who would recommend SGMC to a friend (QDP). | 82% | 85% | 90% |
|  | Student feedback | % of students who feel safe at college. | 88% | 95% | 94% |
|  | Recruitment | EFA-funded learners enrolled at the census date. | 1,711 | 1,820 | 1,820 (best guess) |
|  | Recruitment | Application to offer conversion rate. | 75% | 75% | 57% |
|  | **Performance Indicators** | **Measure** | **2018-19**  **Outcome** | **2019-20 Target**  **%** | **Feb 20**  **Update** |
|  | Recruitment | Offer to enrolment conversion rate | 34% | 36% | - |
|  | Internal Progression | % of students progressing from vocational L2 –L3 | 79% | 80% | - |
|  | Internal Progression | % of students progressing from A level year 1 to A-level year 2 | 86% | 90% | - |
|  | Internal Progression | % of students progressing from A Level Year 1 in total | 93% | 94% | - |
|  | Internal Progression | % of students progressing from A Level Year 1 in total | 93% | 94% | - |
|  | Internal Progression | % of students progressing from L3 BTEC Y1 to Y2 | 96% | 95% | - |
|  | Internal Progression | % of all students who could return to the college in the college in 18/19 who do | 90% | 90% | - |

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|  | It was clarified that the 1,820 figure for recruitment is both a target and used for current planning purposes.  In response to an update requested at the previous committee to change the Russell Group target to one expressed in terms of ambitious destinations, it was reported that the request had been carefully considered but that it had been decided to maintain the existing target, though also to bring a report to the next meeting setting out more detail on student destinations.  The Committee, on behalf of the Corporation, approved the new KPIs and their attendant targets. |

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| **9** | **Talent Lab**  A report prepared by the Vice-Principal (Student Services and Recruitment) was received and considered.  It was reported that: |

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|  | **.** | the system provides greater structure to activities that take place outside of the classroom, supporting learning and personal development, it having been designed to put into practice the belief that, to enable students to commit to learning and be willing to change habits and routines which may not be serving them well, daily, weekly and termly activities much be structured so that engagement is not only rewarded but also seen as the norm; |
|  | **.** | typical activities which are offered on each day include independent study, silent study, group work, meetings with Progress Coach/Personal mentor, as well as sporting activities, talks and other events; *or* |
|  | **.** | teachers or support staff might set specific tasks or projects for students to complete. |

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|  | Progress reported from the first term include: |

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|  | **.** | a substantial increase in the number of students working productively on site during Period 2, with the library now full, and other spaces, such as the canteen, regularly full of students working independently at this time - a marginal improvement in attendance at Period 2 has also been seen as a result of not allowing students to leave site at break time; |
|  | **.** | a very substantial increase in the number of students participating in College Sports, with the Sports Hall now oversubscribed in Period 2, and the gym utilised far more effectively; |
|  | **.** | building on the introduction of Pathway Gatherings in 2017-18 and whole college assemblies in 2018-19, the inclusion under Talent Lab of more whole college and Pathway specific assemblies with less disruption to lessons; *and* |
|  | **.** | a wide range of well-attended external speakers and college events, with the mandatory element of Talent Lab having led to much higher attendance at talks and workshops outside of lessons. |

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|  | In December 2019, students were asked for the first time in the student survey whether they were encouraged to work hard outside lessons. This was a question, in part, to test whether Talent Lab is having a desired effect on encouraging a hard-working culture. 91% of students agreed that they were encouraged to work hard outside of lessons.  To gain qualitative feedback, a sample of 300 Talent Lab reflections from the Winter Passport gave a snapshot of student opinion. These were overwhelmingly positive and significantly more detailed and expressive than the equivalent ‘FutureFest’ enrichment reflections last year. In addition, the extended SLT have engaged in numerous conversations with students on Talent Lab through Deep Dives, at Entry Periods and during Talent Lab itself.  Most students are using Talent Lab for private study. Many appreciate the structure it gives them and feel it has improved their time management. Some students consider that it has relieved stress and anxiety. They reflect positively on their experiences, demonstrating that many are broadening their experience outside of independent study. Some said that they had made new friends through taking part in new activities.  Most students understand the rationale for the introduction of Talent Lab and value it. A small minority do not, and this generally presents through attempting to gain exit at break, or not settling to an activity by 12:00. Generally, however, students are more likely to understand the rationale when these conversations or reflections are 1:1, away from their peers. This is evidenced in the sample of 300 Talent Lab personal reflections as part of the Monoux Passport, which were overwhelmingly positive.  However, whilst a majority make productive use of their time, students need significant support to minimise distractions from their study or personal development. Often, this is due to mobile phones/ social media and group pressure. Although some students use phones positively during Talent Lab (for example, to access Teams, listen to music or to carry out research), a minority of students find it very challenging to not engage with social media or remove themselves from their peers in order to work effectively.  These observations are of interest, as they help build an understanding of the ability of students to work independently when off site, and without the structure of a timetabled session. This needs to be a focus of attention in order for students to reach the expected standards of productivity. Different methods to reduce these distractions have been trialled, such as introducing a ‘front-of-house’ service in the Library to encourage students to consider how they intend to utilise the space before they enter and to assign students different computers (thereby helping students who arrive in groups to work independently and away from their peers).  Students have also commented that they would like more facility for private study that is silent and access to computers during Period 2 Talent Lab. Since the start of term, and within a tight budget this academic year, the College has been attempting to meet this demand.  Due to the way Talent Lab appears on the student timetable, approximately a quarter of students do not currently have a mandatory Talent Lab session (though these are still able to engage in Talent Lab during Period 1 and 3, and many do so voluntarily). These are mainly students who are doing one of (or mainly both) English and Maths and who therefore have a relatively full timetable. The College is planning to expand mandatory Talent Lab to all students from next academic year.  Features of and challenges in relation to the Monoux Passport and Entry Periods were also noted.  The Principal indicated that Talent Lab remains in development, and that at present too many students see it as simply an activity for the second period of the day. Mindsets are changing but there is much more to do.  The Committee Chair enquired about the application of resources to the activity given that the library is full, the number of computers running short and the sports hall at capacity. SLT responded that an extra member of staff had been employed to oversee Talent Lab, new computers had been purchased and that they are mindful of the need to ensure proper resourcing in line with the extra student activity. Additional temporary classrooms are being built at the campus to accommodate the increased student body.  In response to a question as to how much of Talent Lab is led by students, it was reported that, whilst students have been involved in developing small study groups and running student voice workshops, the College is looking to develop the amount of student-led activity in Talent Lab. For example, there is a History Reading group which had been running for a few weeks, and which is an example of something that in the longer term could be handed over to student leadership.    It was agreed that Talent Lab had been a positive and brave introduction to the College, but is not yet fully reliased. In particular, it must be seen as wider than just a Period 2 activity, and as encompassing all additional college activities in which students engage outside lessons. |

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| **10** | **Student Survey Report**  A report following the December 2019 survey was received and considered.  It was noted that: |

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|  | **.** | the College conducts all student QDP surveys in December, as part of the Winter Passport, and therefore the surveys from December 2017 (the closest to the last Ofsted inspection) and December 2018 had been used as the main points of comparison; |
|  | **.** | caution must be exercised when directly comparing results, since the response rate was poor in December 2017 (47%), good in December 2018 (81%) and in December 2019 (83%) – a survey (64% response rate) conducted in February 2017 serves as a baseline, though because of changes to questions it does not operate as a comparator in all instances; |
|  | **.** | surveys show a significant and sustained improvement across the vast majority of categories questioned over time since February 2017, both in terms of the raw Agree/Disagree scores, but also the ‘rating’ (a weighted percentage with the value of 0-100) which provides a reflection of the target groups' perception, as it is based on accepting that Agree Mostly is less than Agree Completely and therefore always shows a lower score than the raw %agree/disagree rating - this trend could be even more pronounced due to the mandatory nature of students completing surveys in December 2018 and December 2019, with groups who over time are less likely to report being satisfied having participated in much higher numbers during the last two years; |
|  | **.** | summary results are as follows: |

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|  |  | **.** | a significant improvement in responses to the question ‘If I don’t come to College someone contacts me’, with 83% of students agreeing with this statement in December 2018, and 92% in December 2019 - up from 68% in December 2017, and representing an overall improved rating of 16 points since December 2017; |
|  |  | **.** | 89% of students in December 2019 and 81% of students in December 2018 stated they knew who to ask for help with problems, improving from December 2017 (78%) but, whilst this shows a significant improvement across the college, this score is lower in the Legal & Finance and Society & Culture pathways, although higher for Legal and Finance compared to last year; |
|  |  | **.** | 84% (December 2019), 69% of students (Dec 2018) and 71% (Dec 2017) agreed with the statement that Passport helps set goals and plan for life after college; |
|  |  | **.** | in December 2019, students were asked for the first time whether they are encouraged to work hard outside lessons, a question to investigate whether Talent Lab is having a desired effect on encouraging a hard working culture - 91% of students agreed with this statement, with a rating score of 70; |
|  |  | **.** | 94% of students agreed that they feel safe in the College (88% December 2018, 88% December 2017), a sustained improvement from 2016 (74%) - Caribbean and Black British-African students are marginally less likely to report feeling safe, a trend continuing over time; |
|  |  | **.** | 93% of students responded that they had not experienced bullying at the College in December 2019 (86%: December 2018, 87%: December 2017; |
|  |  | **.** | there has been a sustained improvement in the rating students give to the College on recommending it to a friend, from 52 in February 2017 to 60 in December 2017, 59 in December 2018 and 67 in December 2019 - 90% of students now agree with this statement. |

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|  | In response to a question on how often students and parents receive notification of missed lessons, it was reported that the vast majority of parents receive an automatic text if a lesson is missed. There follows a ‘calling list’ which a team go through when students miss more than one lesson, though this does not include all students since each call takes around five minutes to complete, with student records needing to be checked in advance and notes written after. |

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| **11** | **External Corporate Hospitality**  There was nothing to report. |
| **12** | **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checking of Governors**  The Clerk to the Corporation had confirmed that all governors possess current clearances. |
| **13** | **Date and Time of Remaining Meetings 2019-20**  The following date and time were noted:  ***Monday 1 June 2020 (5.30pm)*** |
| **14** | **Any Other Competent Business**  None. |

**List of Actions Arising from the Minutes**

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| *Minute No.* | *Person Responsible* | *Action Required* |
| **8** | Vice-Principal: Student Services and Recruitment  Clerk to the Corporation | Bring a report to the next meeting setting out more detail on student destinations.  Provide for consideration of the report on the next agenda. |