

Grey College Association AGM Minutes
13th April 2024 at 2pm, Old Library, Grey College

Minute 890 - Welcome

The President welcomed members to the 2024 AGM.

Those present:

P Swift, T Hooper, P James. M Gribble, A Petch, S Virdee (College Principal & invited speaker) - in person

C Brett, T Cliff, M Wong, R Bolitho, P Edwards, R Moore, C Jewkes, I Ramage, C Higgins, S Gregory, G Whitehead (Director, DARO & invited speaker) – via Zoom

Minute 891 – Apologies for Absence:

A Fenton, Rebecca Butler, R Hilton, Richard Butler, S Yarwood, R Benham, D Baldwin, C Woolley , M Cannon

Minute 892 – Approval of Minutes of 2018 AGM:

The Secretary summarised the minutes as recording:

- discussion of falling new member numbers with a consequent dramatic loss of income
- the negative impact of 2018 GDPR legislation changes on our ability to know who our members are.
- the University’s review of it’s relationship with “arms’-length organisations” such as SCRs and independent College Alumni Associations.

The Association Exec had agreed during the pandemic to stop taking membership fees, to admit all Grey College graduates to Association membership and to seek a new fund-raising model.

As proposed by the President, the minutes were approved on a ‘General Aye’.

Minute 893 – President’s Report:

There has been almost no Association activity since the Covid pandemic. The College was congratulated on the results of the refurbishment, and was thanked for facilitating the Association’s first hybrid A.G.M.

Minute 894 – Treasurer’s Report:

With virtually no income and no expenditure in the last 4 years, the Association’s financial position is healthy with total assets of £51,121.

The Treasurer advised the meeting that Nat West bank has closed our accounts because of no transactions. A decision is needed on where to place these funds in future.

Minute 895 – Durham University’s Alumni Engagement plans – Presentation by Glen Whitehead (Director of Development & Alumni relations Office)

Glen outlined the plans being developed by DARO future engagement with Alumni, based on appeals for “Time, Talent and Treasure”. Following the success of the ‘Durham Inspired’ campaign, focus is now shifting toward the 220th anniversary in 2032 of the University’s founding. Details are still under discussion and must remain confidential at this stage.

Minute 896 – Future Grey College Alumni Engagement strategy – Presentation by Sonia Virdee (Principal, Grey College)

The Principal introduced her proposals regarding the College’s future strategy for Alumni Engagement. The approach is based on a framework developed by the University’s Secretary and legal team and specifies:

- Alumni Associations are legally part of the University
- College Principal is a member of executive with responsibility/ accountability for governance oversight of the Alumni Organisation
- Aims /objectives /operational arrangements to be set down in local Standing Orders
- The current Association Executive will be replaced by a new Alumni Engagement Steering Group (AESG) which will report to the College Advisory Board (CAB) and will maintain funds for Alumni Engagement and/or student benefit, including the Association’s current funds.
- AESG will work on planning of events for Alumni with the College and JCR, on communications and on fundraising with the College Trust. First focus to be on the forthcoming anniversaries (40 years of women in Grey, 65th & 70th College ‘birthdays’, etc.)
- Membership of the Alumni Engagement Steering Group will comprise: Chair of CAB, College Principal & Vice Principal, SCR members, JCR President
- College Alumni organisations will work within the University’s GDPR and financial compliance rules and take advantage of DARO’s records and experience

New roles for alumni will include

- A member of the College Advisory Board
- Chair of AESG
- Secretary of AESG

Further alumni representation on the AESG and College Trust are to be decided.

The President asked for comments/ questions from the meeting :

Chris Higgins, Tom Cliff, Charlie Jewkes, Steve Gregory and others stressed that the Association's funds (given by students in the past) must be put into an account of the University a.s.a.p. and should continue to be ring-fenced for the benefit of students. Chris Higgins suggested that the money should be held by the College Trust, while Tom Cliff favoured lodging it with the JCR. Toby Hooper strongly advised that the conditions under which these funds could be spent in future be made clear in writing to avoid future difficulties or uncertainty. The Principal strongly supported the continuing use of current Alumni Association funds to benefit students, and favoured the College Trust as the holder of that £51k.

The President noted that, while financial contributions by Alumni are important, practical support such as in careers matters or as College Mentors continue to be valuable contributions by Alumni.

Andy Petch stressed the benefit of communications to Alumni coming from one organisation (the College) in future, rather than from College and the Association as in the past.

When questioned about how Alumni can be reached, given GDPR constraints, the Principal stressed that data sharing between the University and Colleges is already in place. Multiple channels can / will be used, including digital comms and social media, events and post.

When asked about if alumni representatives to College bodies such as CAB, the Trust and the AESG would be elected by an Association AGM in future, the Principal felt that would not be necessary, given the variety of communications channels available. A mechanism should be worked out by the AESG

After a lengthy discussion, the President proposed:

- 1) That management of Alumni matters be taken over by the College as outlined in the Principal's paper. The Principal will assume responsibility for oversight of Alumni matters and the Exec will be replaced by the Alumni Engagement Steering Group as outlined. This was accepted unanimously by the meeting.
- 2) That the Association's current funds be transferred to a ring-fenced account under the control of the College Trust, with spending decisions being made by the AESG. This was approved by 14 votes to 1 (Tom Cliff voted to transfer the funds to JCR control). Tom Cliff / Charlie Jewkes to make arrangements with Nat West Bank to hand over the funds to an account to be notified by the College.

Minute 897 Meeting closed

The President expressed the belief that the decisions made would strengthen the links between Grey College and its Alumni, to the benefit of Alumni and the whole College community. She thanked those present for their contribution to the debate as well as all those who have served the Association so well since its foundation. She closed what may well be the last A.G.M. of the Grey College Alumni Association at 15.45 pm.

