



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast



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Annual Report
2020-21

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

On behalf of the Governing Body of Stranmillis University College, it gives me much pleasure to introduce this report to all our stakeholders on the performance of the University College during the Academic Year 2020-21.

As recorded by the Principal in her Report, there were many positive achievements throughout a very difficult year. We acknowledge those achievements and the good performance against targets in the 2020-21 Business Plan, for both of which, thanks go to the Principal for her leadership; to all staff for their commitment and resilience; and to students for their adaptability. Thanks also go to our Sponsor Department, the Department for the Economy for their continuing financial support. In respect to the latter, the capital funding to enable the imaginative adjustments to Nendrum Halls and to create more social space for students and upgrade facilities in Halls, was most welcome.

As the College moves forward into the next academic year and begins to open up the College campus again, developing strategies for re-

engaging face-to-face with our students and developing a balanced, blended learning approach will be important, as will the continuing measures that will be needed in order to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of all campus users. If there is one thing that the pandemic has taught us, it is the importance of continuing agility in embracing new technologies and ensuring that our students are prepared fully for the digital world, including within schools.

As we begin to evaluate our handling of the pandemic, there will undoubtedly be other lessons to be learned; thus helping the College to continuously improve its Business Continuity Planning as we move forward.

This is my final term as Chair of the College's Governing Body. I wish the College continuing success as it

welcomes a new Chair. I would also like to place on record, the Governing Body's thanks to the former Principal, Professor Anne Heaslett who retired in September 2021, for her service to the College over 14 years. I also wish every success for the new Principal, Professor Jonathan Heggarty in his challenging new role.



Professor Sir Desmond Rea
Chair of the Governing Body

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Change is a constant in life. We normally deal with change in our everyday lives by making incremental adjustments to our daily practice. However, there are times when the scale of change is so dramatic, as was the case this year, that it requires transformation.

During periods of turbulence, it is critically important to remain focused on an organisation's core values and mission so that it avoids becoming insular and remains outward looking.

Despite all the exceptional challenges encountered in the 2020-21 academic year as a result of the global pandemic, the College remained focused on its Mission:

'Transforming the lives of children, young people and communities, through excellence in teaching, scholarship and research.'

In order to continue driving and leading innovative professional practice that is:

- Shaping education
- Unlocking potential
- Building better futures for all
- Connecting globally

The disruptive force of Covid-19 tested the resolve of our staff to make an innovative response to an unprecedented situation. They responded with a magnificent display of proactive professionalism and engagement as the College took on the challenge of redefining

the delivery of teaching and learning by moving to a largely online learning mode.

The move to online learning at an accelerated pace during national lockdowns was made possible because we had invested in our staff as well as our IT infrastructure. Investment in a new virtual learning environment (CANVAS), new IT equipment to address Student Digital Poverty and equipment to assist staff with remote learning and teaching proved essential in order to operate in the virtual environment. However, the effective delivery was only achieved through the innovative practice of our staff, as reflected in the 98% retention rate and 95% success rates for students at the end of the academic year. These success rates were also a reflection of the pastoral and academic support provided by Student and Learning Services during a time when student needs had grown exponentially. It is a measure of the effectiveness of this support that the College was not only able to record high success rates for those graduating but also a 12% increase in the number of students participating in our Degree Enhancement programme despite

the imposition of government restrictions having an impact on the ability of students to engage in some of the activities that would normally be available to them. In the 2020-21 academic year, all international placements were suspended in the light of the global pandemic.

However, proactive partnership building continued remotely and the College's application for the Turing Scheme was successfully submitted. A new residential is being planned for Corrymeela in October 2021 to enhance learning and develop a sense of community amongst international students, supported by the international coordinators and international buddies.



The national lockdown also curtailed many of the normal activities associated with the College's Community Engagement and Widening Participation programme, particularly those scheduled to take place on campus. Using a range of virtual tools, the team continued to support Upgrade-U projects, developing live and pre-recorded lessons for children, young people and their families. Best practice learning activities/lessons were then released to schools/education settings through a new area on the College's website. The Widening Participation Team also participated in a number of Stakeholder WP Events to provide support for Parental Engagement and Care-leavers. Ensuring there was ongoing engagement with key stakeholders was critical in order to consolidate and further develop the College long-term investment in widening access to higher education for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

During the lockdown period, the College not only succeeded in completing its REF2021 return ahead of time but also witnessed a growth in the research work of the Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement. A number of reports were produced that examined the issue of underachievement from a range of perspectives, including from within Loyalist and Republican circles, which will help to shape future policy direction.

Throughout the pandemic, the College was cognisant of the need to continue to support the development needs of education professionals. Special professional development courses were developed in collaboration with, and funded by, Teaching Unions to support classroom practitioners. Staff contributed to a Webinar Q&A supported by DfE for all schools, colleges, WomenEd NI, Quality

Forums, and the National Education Union.

Under the exceptional circumstances of the 2020-21 the College recorded a 60% increase in Master's level enrolments. This growth was in part promoted by the provision of more online Master's modules and the introduction of the Recognition of Prior Learning. In turn, these developments are creating a strong foundation which will enable the College to take forward its proposal to seek validation of a Doctorate in Professional Practice for those working in education and related fields.

The College's work was also recognised through a number of awards and nominations. In June 2021 it was awarded the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) Membership Quality Standard. In the 2021

Edufuturist Awards Stranmillis was one of the four nominated finalists in the University of the Year category. Although the College did not win the award, being a nominated finalist in a UK competition was a wonderful endorsement of a hard working dedicated staff.

Covid-19 severely disrupted the work of the College's Hospitality, Accommodation & Conferencing Department. There were frequent rent pauses offered to students as we faced national lockdown and conferencing activity was decimated by the pandemic. Throughout this period of disruption, staff remained focused on supporting those students who opted to remain in Halls.

There are important positives to be highlighted. While there was a low occupancy of Halls because of the Covid-19 restrictions and the move to online learning, those students who did remain in Halls were highly complimentary of the way they were looked after by the HACs staff, as one student commented:

'I really appreciate all the effort each and every staff member in Halls has gone to regarding the safety of the students and I look forward to coming back

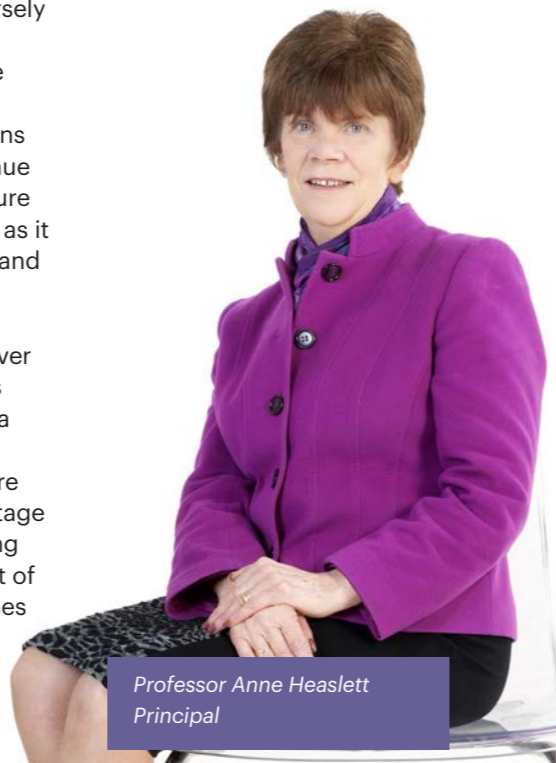
Another positive outcome of the pandemic was the College's ability to attract Covid-19 Contingency Funding which enabled it to invest in the Halls of Residence. This has resulted in the refurbishment of Nendrum Hall and improvements to kitchens and social spaces across all Halls. These improvements are an important response not just to a global pandemic but also issues raised in student surveys. Out of a challenging situation a 'win-win' outcome was achieved and has resulted in full occupancy going into the 2021-22 academic year.

While the College's income generation strategy was adversely affected by the pandemic, prudent management plus the government Covid-19 support measures, means that it remains financially viable. It can continue to focus on investing in its future and taking forward its Mission as it looks to its centenary in 2022 and the journey beyond.

During the lockdown period over £1.5m was invested in campus improvements culminating in a total investment in the past decade of over £?m. Plans were also progressed for the next stage of development as the planning approval for the refurbishment of the College's all-weather pitches

was granted. This is a major development that will open up new and exciting opportunities for the College to serve its students and the community.

On reflection the global pandemic has been a catalyst for accelerating and consolidating changes that have already been identified as requirements for a dynamic and forward looking institution. For the past decade the College's strategic priorities have been about supporting transformation, which is not an event but a journey. The College ends the 2020-21 year well placed to begin the next stage of its transformational journey.



Professor Anne Heaslett
Principal



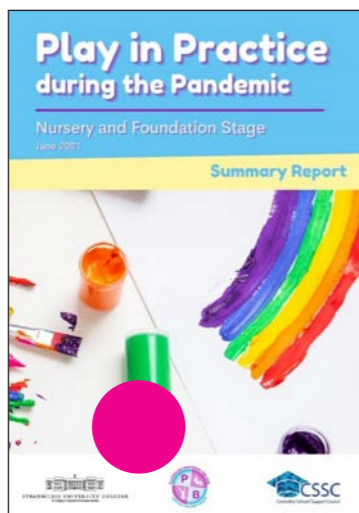
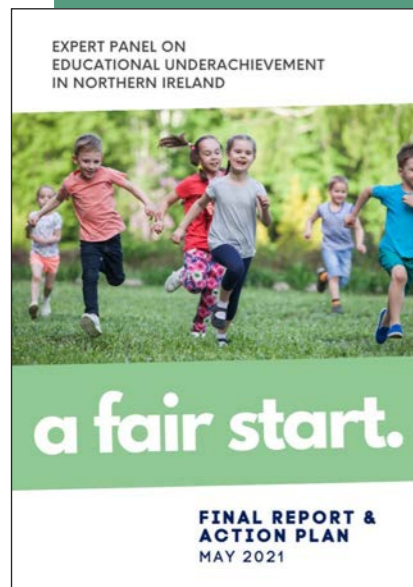
SHAPING EDUCATION

For the past 100 years, through a clear focus on delivering world-class, impact-driven research and scholarship, backed by high-quality research-informed teaching, the College has been a learning leader in shaping educational policy and practice locally and internationally.

SHAPING EDUCATION

THE EXPERT PANEL ON EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT

In July 2020 Dr Noel Purdy, Director of Research and Scholarship and Director of the College's Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement, was appointed by the NI Education Minister, Peter Weir MLA, to chair a new Expert Panel established under the 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement to examine the links between educational underachievement and social disadvantage. The Panel's Final Report and Action Plan ('A Fair Start') was published on 1st June 2021, having been endorsed by all five Executive parties. We look forward to the implementation of the 47 actions included in 'A Fair Start'.



experiences of home-schooling during the second extended period of home-schooling (January to March 2021). The report was based on over 2,000 survey responses and highlighted the disproportionate impact of school closures on disadvantaged families.

RESEARCH GROWTH

2020-21 has been an extremely busy year for the Research Office, the Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement and our academic researchers as they continue to deliver on our commitment to shaping education and changing lives. As well as publishing a number of important and high profile research and scholarship outputs across a range of key areas, the College successfully completed its submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF2021), the system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. The REF results will be published in May 2022.



EDUCATION IN A PANDEMIC

Covid-19 has had an unprecedented impact on education since March 2020. Since then, the College has published the findings of several research studies including an important study of how young children's play has been impacted by the pandemic led by Dr Glenda Walsh in conjunction with PlayBoard NI and the Controlled Schools' Support Council. In March 2021, the Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement also published the findings of their second survey into parental



HOW DO LOYALISTS AND REPUBLICANS VIEW EDUCATION?

Our Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU) in collaboration with St. Mary's University College carried out a pilot study to examine the educational experiences and perspectives on educational underachievement of loyalist and republican former prisoners and community activists. The small-scale study was funded by the Northern Ireland Office and the Republic of Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs and led to a subsequent panel discussion as part of the 2021 Féile an Phobail.



WHAT'S THE GENDER DIFFERENCE?

The low number of male teachers in Northern Ireland has often been cited as a contributing factor to the educational underachievement of boys, in particular. In collaboration with the Controlled Schools Support Council (CSSC), our Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU) published the findings of a small-scale study exploring the perceptions of the difference male primary teachers can make in a school, according to pupils, teachers, parents and principals.

REFUGEE PUPILS

Commissioned by the Education Authority, our Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU) published a new independent study led by Dr John McMullen examining the educational experiences of Syrian refugee pupils and the support requirements of NI teachers, and investigating barriers to accessing the educational environment which may have resulted from the effects of previous trauma.

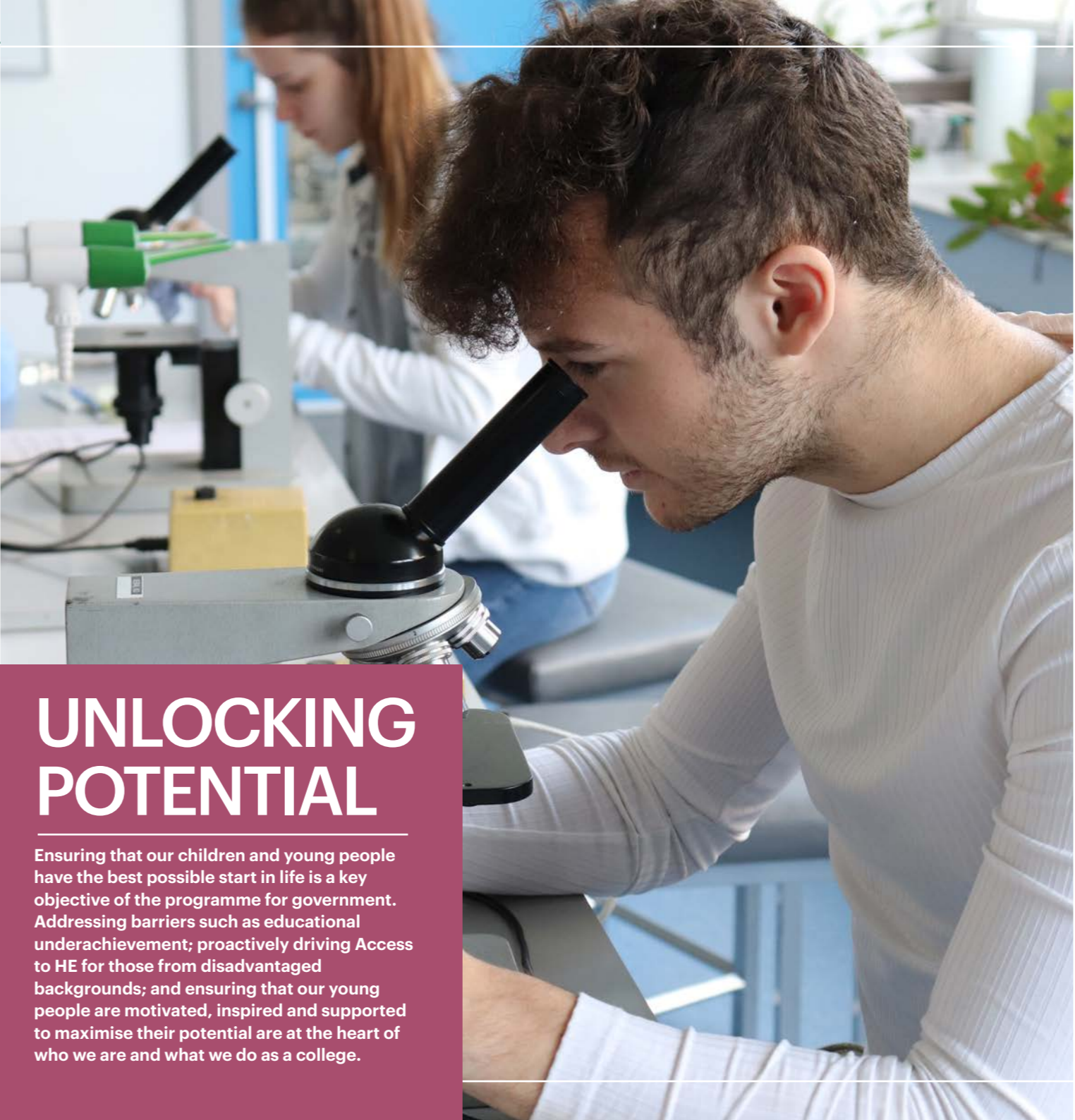
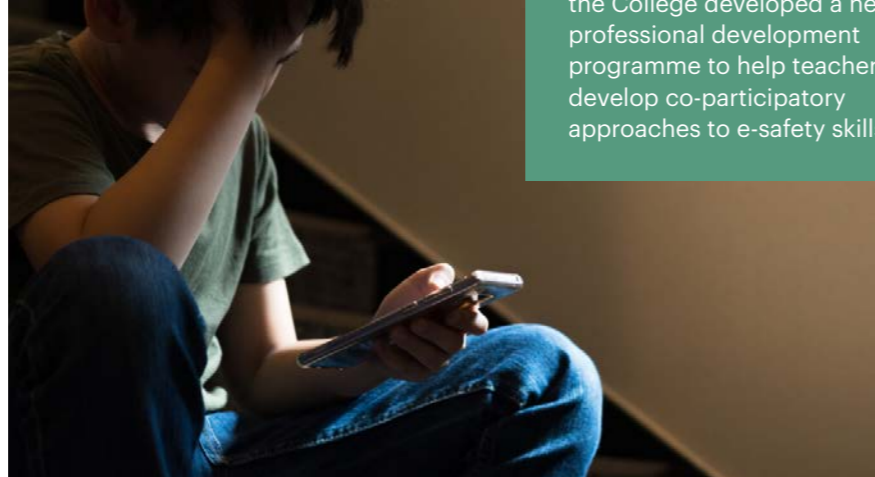


SHAPING EDUCATION



SAFEGUARDING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Recent reports have highlighted a surge in access to online technology by children and young people. Despite undoubted social and educational benefits, there are concerns that this increased access exposes young people to increased risk of negative experiences (cyberbullying, sexting, blackmail, sexual exploitation). Drawing on international research evidence, the College developed a new professional development programme to help teachers develop co-participatory approaches to e-safety skills.



UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

Ensuring that our children and young people have the best possible start in life is a key objective of the programme for government. Addressing barriers such as educational underachievement; proactively driving Access to HE for those from disadvantaged backgrounds; and ensuring that our young people are motivated, inspired and supported to maximise their potential are at the heart of who we are and what we do as a college.

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL



BOOKS COMING ALIVE!

Our Year 1 English and Literacy specialists designed a range of digital storytelling lessons and resources using the medium of drama for use in virtual Books Coming Alive sessions with some of our widening participation partner schools. The staff and pupils at the schools took part in broadcasts, learning about literacy and stories, with active learning strategies and indoor and outdoor explorations.

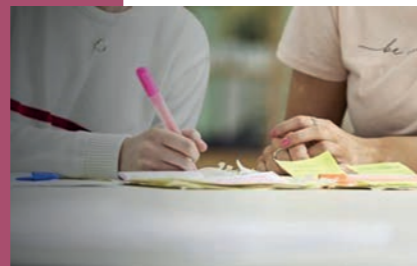


MATHEMATICS WEEK

In an innovative approach to school outreach as part of our widening participation strategy, the College virtually welcomed over 100 pupils and teachers for an interactive learning programme where our Year 2 students created a range of interactive resources and brought Maths alive using video learning and technology in the classroom to inspire children to learn STEM skills in an engaging, interactive and fun way.

STUDENT SATISFACTION

Providing the highest quality teaching and learning, student experience and student support is a key strategic pillar for the College. The College was delighted that in the 2019 National Student Survey, carried out during the pandemic, the College was ranked 1st in Northern Ireland and 6th in the UK for overall student satisfaction.



No.1

student Satisfaction in Northern Ireland'



STUDENTS CONTINUE TO SUCCEED

Despite the restrictions of the pandemic and the need to adopt new approaches to our teaching and learning, the College maintained its outstanding levels of student retention (97%) and student success (97%), which reflects the hard work, professionalism and unfailing commitment to our students from academic staff, student support services, the Student's Union and support staff.

TICK THE BOX

Stranmillis University College is continuing to work in collaboration with the Fostering Network to encourage any learners from care backgrounds to tick the UCAS box in support of their journey into Higher Education. Ticking the box provides students with practical and financial support while at University #TickTheBox.



ENSURING BEST AND SUITABLE

Our BEd and BA programmes attract a very large number of applications and, as part of the recruitment process to ensure the best and most suitable calibre of students are offered places, the College conducts a rigorous interview process. With restrictions on face-to-face interviews, the enormous challenge of interviewing over 1100 applicants online was successfully managed by our Registry team, supported by our academic teams and external Associate Placement Assessors.



ACCESS TO HEA

A strong programme of Access to HE events and activities, from coding workshops to wellbeing events, supporting communities in disadvantaged areas to forging partnerships with Fostering Network, Volunteer Now and the FE College; together with the delivery, free of charge, of online and blended learning professional development courses to over 1,000 teachers and education professionals demonstrate the College's commitment to supporting our widening participation and access to HE for all goals.



RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

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RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

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BLOG POSTS

Harris, J. (2020) "What we can learn about Educational Underachievement from the GCSE and A-Level experience of 2020?", Stranmillis CREU Blog, 26 August 2020.

Harris, J. Purdy, N., Walsh, G. (2021) 'Why holding a postponed, single transfer test is likely to widen educational inequalities between wealthy and poor within the current P7 cohort'. Stranmillis CREU Blog, 11 January 2021.

Jones, S. (2021) 'Back to School: Learning Together after Lockdown'. Stranmillis CREU Blog, 17 February 2021.

McMullen, J & Walsh, G. (2020) 'Prioritising Play when Schools Reopen'. Stranmillis CREU Blog, 24 August 2020.

McMullen, J & Simms, V. (2021). School Return and Balancing Acts. Blog Post for Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement, Stranmillis University College. Stranmillis CREU Blog, 22 February 2021.

Purdy, N. (2021) 'Left to their own devices...again! The enduring inequality of lockdown home-schooling'. Stranmillis CREU Blog. 7 January 2021.

BOOK REVIEWS

Harris, J. (2020) 'Marcus M. Payk and Roberta Pergher (eds.), Beyond Versailles; Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and the Formation of New Politics after the Great War. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019. 245 pp.' Nations and Nationalism, 26(3), 779-780

INVITED PRESENTATIONS / KEYNOTE ADDRESS / MEDIA APPEARANCES

Brown, A. W. (2020) Interview on the role of the churches in education, Good Morning Ulster, 9th September 2020.

Hanna, K. (2020) 'Quality for Two Old Children. What Matters for Parents and Early Years Professionals?' Invited presentation to the Early

Childhood Studies Degree Network Annual General Meeting, 20 November 2020.

Harris, J. (2020) 'Educational Underachievement in Northern Ireland', Presentation to Expert Panel to Tackle Educational Underachievement, 25 August 2020

McKay-Redmond, B. (2020) Interview for EATV on 'Love the Daily Mile - Love Your Heart'.]

McMullen, J. (2021) Interview and panel on BBC Radio Ulster 'Sunday Sequence' on the impact of lockdown on children's mental health and well-being,

Purdy, N. (2020) Interview on BBC Radio Ulster "Evening Extra" on NI Audit Office Report on SEN in NI. 30 September 2020.

Purdy, N. (2021) Interview for UTV Live on Homeschooling during Lockdown. 17 January 2021

Purdy, N. (2021) 'Transfer Tests and Access to Grammar School Places' - CREU podcast interview with Dr Sam Simms UCL/JoE. Available at <https://www.stran.ac.uk/creu-podcast-transfer-tests-and-access-to-grammar-school-places/>

Purdy, N. (2021) BBC Radio Ulster Evening Extra - interview on homeschooling/inequity. 26 February 2021.

Purdy, N. (2021) 'The Future of Education - perspectives from Northern Ireland'. Invited panel presentation and Q&A discussion at Annual UK Conference for Community Voice (Union) Saturday 19 June 2021. <https://www.voicetheunion.org.uk/events/voice-section-conference-2021-virtual>

Purdy, N. (2021) 'A Fair Start - Final Report & Action Plan of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement in Northern Ireland'. Invited presentation to Minister, Permanent Secretary and all Department of Education staff (webinar), 22 June 2021

Purdy, N. (2021) 'The Challenges and Opportunities for Education Following the Experience of the Global Pandemic'. Invited Panel Discussion for the National Association for Pastoral Care in Education Conference 'Does Every Child Still Matter? A New Approach to Education.' 8th July 2021

Walsh, G. (2020) 'In search of the holy grail: a fair start for all', Presentation to Expert Panel to Tackle Educational Underachievement, 21 October 2020

Walsh, G. (2020) 'School Life after Lockdown: Striking the Balance, ParentLine NI Podcast - #14 - School Life after Lockdown: Striking the Balance (buzzsprout.com), November 2020

Walsh, G. (2021). 'Towards the Best and Fairest Start for All', Invited Presentation, the Department of Education Curriculum and Assessment Team, Tuesday 23 March 2021

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

McKee, M. (2020) Understanding Physical Literacy Module (Online). A Tutor & Participant Resource File for Physical Literacy. Dublin: Sport Ireland.

McMurray, S. (2020). Understanding Memory Difficulties. A Resource File for SEN. Bangor: DENI.

McMurray, S. (2020). The beginning reading programme: the importance of a balanced approach. A Resource File for SEN. Bangor: DENI.

McMurray, S. (2020) The importance of ensuring that all children can develop an effective phonics strategy. A Resource File for SEN. Bangor: DENI.

McMurray, S. (2020) The importance of an integrated approach when learning to spell. A Resource File for SEN. Bangor: DENI.

Simons, I. McAleese, G. (2020) 'Go Berserk, Digital Resource - App' Belfast: Go Berserk, available at live1.go-berserk.com

OTHER

Purdy, N. & Spears, B. (2020) 'Co-participatory approaches to research with children and young people' (Editorial), Pastoral Care in Education, 38:3, 187-190, DOI: 10.1080/02643944.2020.1788816

Purdy, N. and Harris, J. (2021) Development Proposal 574: Objection on behalf of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council. Belfast: Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement.

Walsh, G. (2021) Foreword in MacBlain, S., *Learning Theories in Practice*. London: Sage

BUILDING FUTURES

Education can have a transformative power not just on the lives of individuals, but on the future prosperity and wellbeing of families, communities and society as a whole.



BUILDING FUTURES

Through our teaching and learning, our research and scholarship, and our widening participation and engagement activities, Stranmillis aim is to be a transformative power that is helping build a better, brighter and more prosperous future for all.



INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

The securing of Covid-19 Contingency Funding enabled the College to invest over £500,000 in upgrading Stran Halls, creating a better and safer student experience, with new social spaces and upgraded kitchen facilities in flats. £1.5m was also invested on other campus projects including improved campus Wi-Fi, a new Learning Management System and Teaching and Learning equipment for staff and students.

WORKING TOGETHER, ACHIEVING TOGETHER

As we came to the end of the 2018-21 Corporate Plan, we can look back and reflect on the many achievements we have made collectively as a team over the past 3 years - staff, students, management and board all working with a clear focus to meet and exceed challenging targets, even with a global pandemic thrown in to the mix!



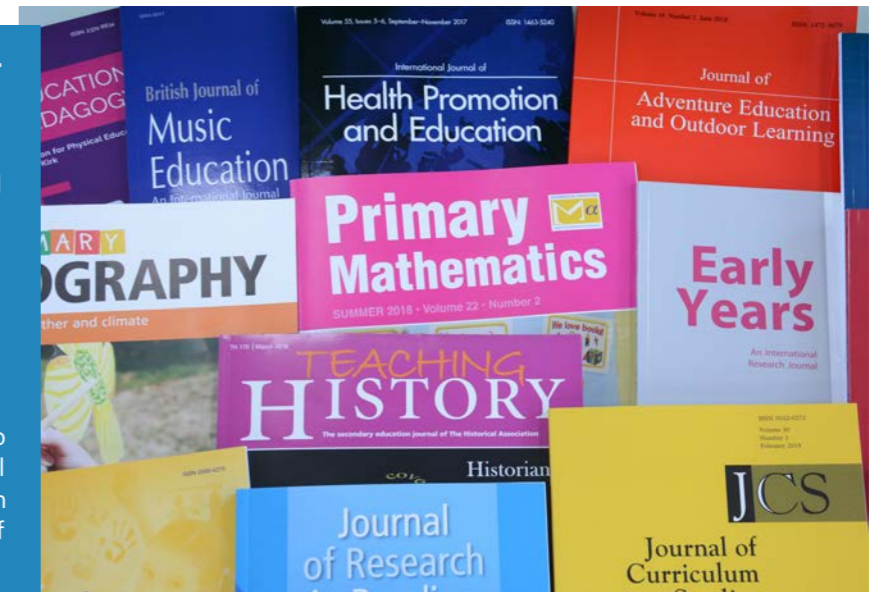
PITCHES PROJECT PROGRESSING

During the year, the College received Planning Approval to proceed with the development of its 4G sports pitch and multi-sports area. The new facilities, when complete, will provide a superb resource for the College, our partner schools and the wider local community.



CAREER-LONG PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In line with the Department of Education's Learning Leaders strategy, Stranmillis is committed to developing and delivering high-quality, research-informed, and practice-driven professional development for education professionals. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the College has continued to work closely with the sector to develop demand-led blended professional development programmes, which have attracted record numbers of enrolments this year.



SUPPORTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The impact of Covid-19 on our personal and working lives has been immense. To support staff and students through these unprecedented times, our HR and Student Support teams implemented an extensive range of measures and initiatives to enhance a positive mindset, mental wellbeing and resilience. This included free access to the award-winning Feeling Good App; running Mental Health First Aid Training to create a network of trained volunteers; and providing access to a range of free online resources via the Inspire Support Hub.



EDUFUTURISTS

The College was shortlisted as one of the four finalists for the Edufuturists University of the Year Awards for "the excellent work of the university research and the amazing digital support that was provided during lockdown."

BUILDING FUTURES



STRAN SU TAKES TOP SPOT

This year has been a year like no other - a year of constant challenges when, probably more than ever, creativity, innovative thinking and sheer hard work were needed to ensure that the Stran community stayed connected and supported each other. Our Students' Union's success in this was recognised by the Union of Students in Ireland and NUS, winning the Small SU Team of the Year in the #SAAI21 awards for the second year in a row.

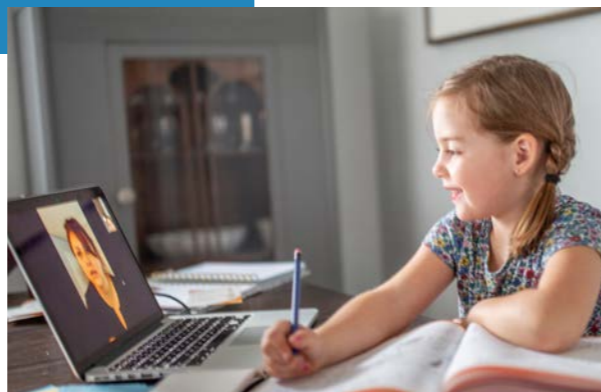


TIME TO THRIVE

Our Widening Participation team and Student Ambassadors developed a fantastic suite of fun, interactive downloadable audio and video lessons for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils focused on skills such as money management/budgeting, time, phonics and spelling. The resources were piloted with 5 Thrive schools and will now be rolled out to a wider school audience.

CODING SCHOOL

Coding is a key skill needed for economic success. The College developed and delivered a free Coding School programme to enhance coding confidence for teachers of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils. The teachers' programme was followed by a four-part Coding School for 17 primary and post primary schools from across the province.



CONNECTING GLOBALLY

Developing and sustaining partnerships, at home and globally, which promote and strengthen learning communities and the sharing of best practice, resources and learning remains a key priority for the College. Our international engagement and partnerships continue to grow, adding flavour and richness to the Stranmillis learning community and broadening the horizons of staff and students alike.



CONNECTING GLOBALLY

AUTISM STUDIES

The College has worked closely with Middletown Centre for Autism for a number of years. That partnership was enhanced further this year with the launch of a specialist Postgraduate Certificate in Autism Studies. The programme, with input from leading practitioners from Stranmillis, Middletown, schools and SEN specialists, is driving skills and knowledge transfer in this key area.



INTERNATIONAL PARTNER DAY

Our annual International Staff Week welcomes partner institutions from Europe, US and beyond. Although we were unable to host it in person this year, we held our first virtual International Partner Day, which allowed us to reach out and share experiences with a wider audience than ever before.

As part of the day, our Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU) also hosted an international symposium on 'International Perspectives on Educational Underachievement.'

NI DOES THE DAILY MILE

The Daily Mile is an important UK-wide health and wellbeing initiative that is proactively supported by the College. This year, 392 schools took part in NI Does the Daily Mile, with almost 400 primary and nursery schools across Northern Ireland running their Daily Mile together (virtually) to raise awareness of children's mental health and wellbeing.



THE DIG

The College was delighted to be able to support student and staff from QUB's Department of Archaeology and Paleoecology to facilitate the fieldwork element of their undergraduate training through excavation work on the campus. The campus has many areas of archaeological interest and the students unearthed some extraordinary finds including 5,000 bits of pottery



ZOOMED OUT

Zoom has become a way of life for many. But what if you got stuck in it! Zoomanji, a 40 minute film with 16 associated lesson plans and resources, is just one of the many innovative teaching resources developed by our students this year. Other resources based around Panto, poetry, short stories and playful ideas for parental engagement with young children have captivated parents, teachers and pupils alike, locally and internationally.

WHY WE CARE

The College was delighted to support the #WhyWeCare Foster Care Fortnight campaign. Ensuring that every care experienced young person has the same opportunities to access Higher Education as their peers is one of the key pillars of the College's Widening Access and Participation strategy.



CONNECTING GLOBALLY

RESTART AND RECOVERY

Teachers from schools in some of the most deprived areas across the province have expressed concern at the gaps in education as a result of school closures. In response, the College, in partnership with Parentkind NI and Barnardos, launched an online Restart and Recovery programme to provide a high-quality, engaging suite of online school resources to support pupils in developing their skills in key areas in the NI curriculum, as well as support for parents and teachers.



MASTERING ONLINE

Covid-19 did not prevent us from making significant progress in developing and expanding our portfolio of blended learning modules and courses. As a result, new Masters' enrolments increased by 60% during this year. This excellent performance reflects the demand for innovative online programmes and provides a significant opportunity for future growth in this vital area, both locally and internationally.



FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

An operating surplus of £604k was achieved in 2020-21 (2019-20 - £185k). However, adjusting for the impact of the FRS102 NILGOSC pension scheme actuarial valuation meant that the University College recorded a deficit of £582k in the 2020-21 year compared with a deficit of £701k in the previous year. The impact of the annual adjustment relating to the NILGOSC Pension actuarial valuation resulted in a charge of £1,186k in the year (2019-20 - £886k).



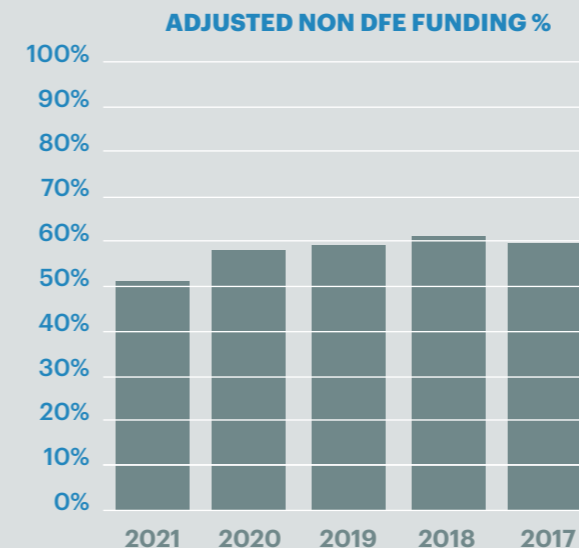
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Total income for the year was £12.2M representing an increase of £663k (5.7%) on the prior year. The following is of particular note:

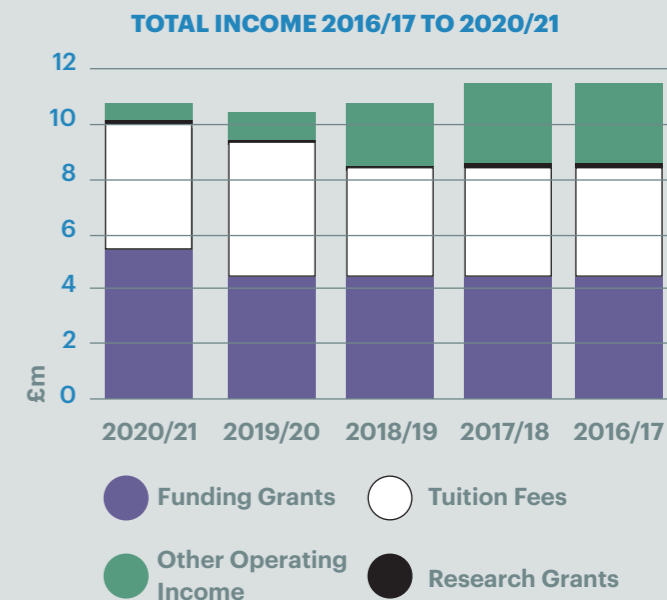
- Funding Grant Income included £750k (2020 – £nil) from the Sponsor Department to assist with the costs of Covid-19 pandemic mitigation measures and includes a contribution of £322k towards lost halls of residence income, assisting with the refurbishment of some halls of residence spaces to aid social distancing, additional funding towards student support, bursaries, and a student Digital Poverty initiative. Funding Grant Income also includes £186k (2020 – £91k) in relation to the University College availing of the Coronavirus Job Retention (Furlough) Scheme during the year.
- Tuition Fee income increased by £326k in the year with income relating to full-time students increasing by 6.7% and part-time tuition fee income increasing by 15% largely as a result in increased uptake in Masters’ modules;
- Halls of Residence, Catering, Conferencing and Room Hire income, under the management of the Hospitality, Accommodation and Conferencing Services Department, contributed £608k or 5.0% of total income in the year (2020 - £1,442k or 12.5%), a decrease of £834k or 57.8%. Resident students were offered a series of ‘rent breaks’ throughout the year as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. The pandemic has also had a detrimental impact on conference, catering and room hire income. There has been strong demand for halls of residence places for the 2021-22 academic year.

The figures and the graph below show the proportion of income, adjusted to remove the distorting impact of deferred capital grant income, derived from sources other than from the Sponsor Department core grant.

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Total Income - ex Core Grant	5,569	6,004	6,449	6,682	6,605
Income adjusted for impact of DCG income release	10,915	10,526	11,051	11,036	11,193
Adjusted Funding %	51%	57%	58%	61%	59%



In addition, the graph below shows the proportion of income derived by income type over the 5 years to 2021 (excluding deferred capital grants).



Despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, income of £924k or 7.6% (2020 – £1,781k or 15.4%) of Total Income in the year was derived from sources other than Sponsoring Department Funding Grants and Tuition Fees. This performance reflects a successful University College strategy, in recent years, to diversify the sources of income and therefore reduce reliance on core government funding.

EXPENDITURE

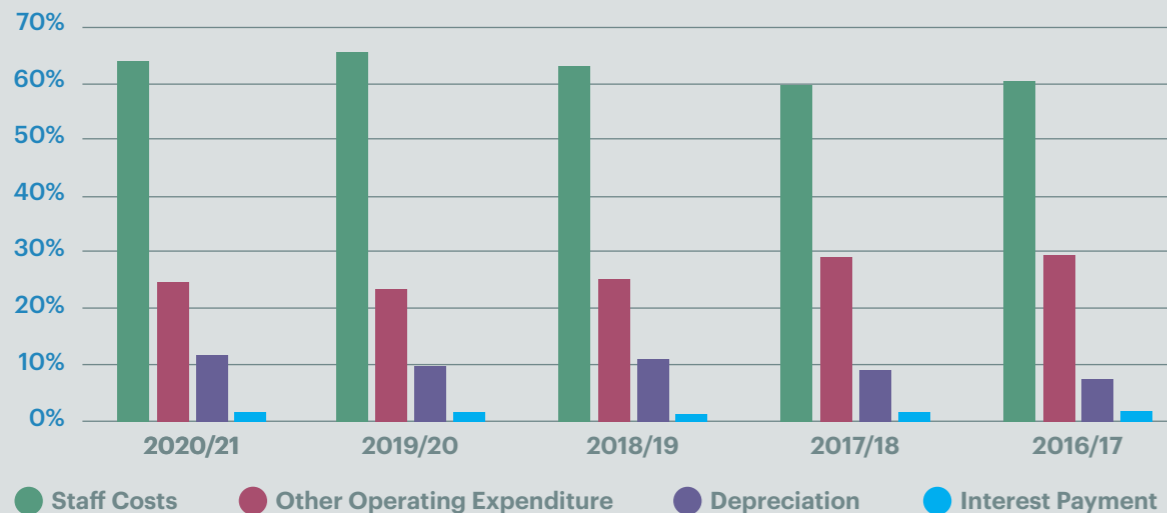
Total Expenditure for the year totalled £12.8m representing an increase of £543k (4.4%) on the prior year. The following is of particular note:

- The most significant element of total expenditure is Staff Costs which equates to 63% of Total Expenditure (2020 – 65%).
- Excluding the FRS102 NILGOSC pension scheme actuarial valuation adjustment, staff costs have decreased by £167k or 2.3%. Due to the lack of income generation opportunities during the COVID-19 lockdown periods, the University College continued to place most of the Hospitality, Accommodation and Catering Services staff, along with a small number of Estates staff, on furlough. Associated income of £186k (2020 - £91k) was recognised from the Coronavirus Job Retention (Furlough) Scheme.
- Other Operating Expenditure of £3,111k increased by £115k or 3.8% on the previous year (2020 decreased by £192k and 6%). Higher Validation Fees (£31k) have been experienced reflecting higher student numbers and related Tuition Fee Income. Covid-19 related expenditure of £303k (2020 - £12k) was incurred in the year in measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and to support staff and students whilst working and studying from home. Much of this extra pandemic related expenditure was funded by the Sponsoring Department. Additional costs of £110k (2020: £nil) were incurred in providing additional bursaries to eligible

students during the Covid-19 pandemic aided by Sponsoring Department funding.

The most significant reduction in expenditure experienced in the year was a reduction in Hospitality, Accommodation and Conferencing Services Operating Expenses by £107k (21%). In addition, Refurbishment, Maintenance and Cleaning costs reduced by £132k or 35% in the year. This is due to the reduced level of campus activities possible as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

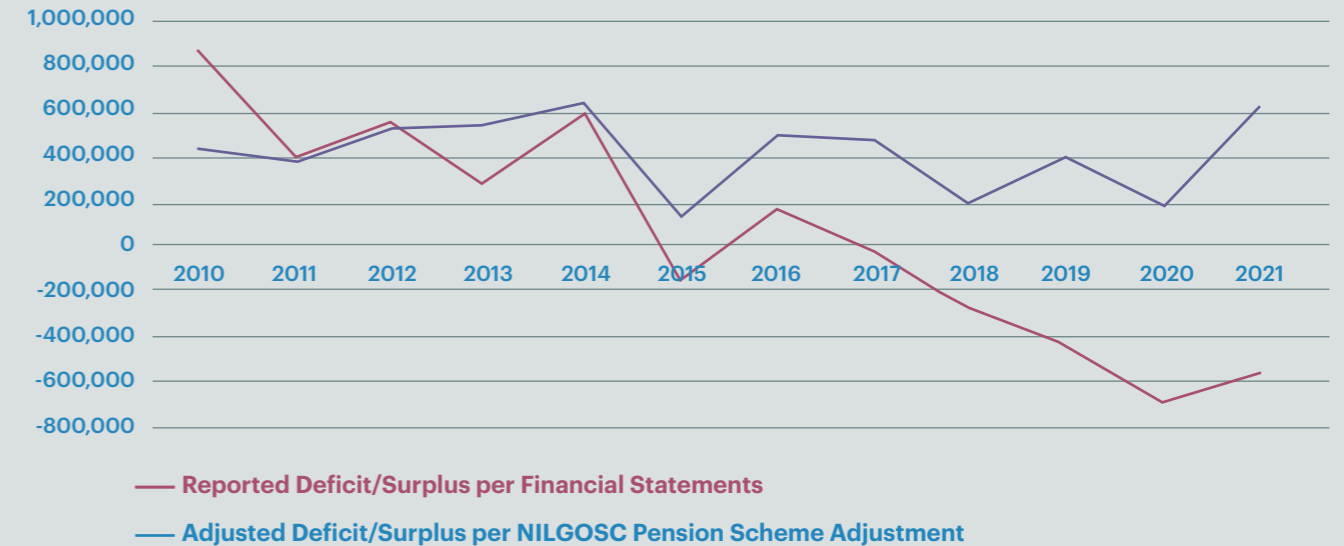
% OF EXPENDITURE TO TOTAL EXPENDITURE 2016/17 TO 2020/21



OPERATING RESULTS

The graph below shows the operating surpluses (before the annual NILGOSC pension scheme actuarial adjustment) compared with the reported financial deficit/surplus including the pension adjustments since 2010.

OPERATING RESULTS (PRE AND POST PENSION)



Statement of Financial Position

As noted above, adjusting for the impact of the annual NILGOSC pension scheme actuarial valuation, an operating surplus of £604k was achieved (2019-20 - £185k) which is reflected in the increase in Reserves excluding Pension Reserve in the year to £26,122k (2019-20 - £25,518k).

With regards to the Pension Reserve, the impact of the annual NILGOSC pension scheme actuarial valuation has decreased the Pension Scheme Liability recorded in the Statement of Financial Position to £7,860k (2019-20: £11,243k).

As a result, the overall Statement of Financial Position now shows a Net Asset Position of £18,262k (2019-20 - £14,275k). The governors have a reasonable expectation that the University College will have adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future as the College continues to maintain significant cash balances and continues to make an operational surplus before the pension scheme

adjustments. However, significant and indeterminable challenges, both in scope and duration, still lie ahead to manage the negative financial impact associated with COVID-19.

Cash Flow

The Cash Flow Statement shows a net increase in cash of £912k (2020 - £311k net increase).

Summary

The University College's financial strategy supports both investment in the campus and ongoing sustainability of operations, whilst the necessity to make efficiency savings has been embraced. The financial performance reflects the Governing Body's commitment to the generation of operating surpluses and to securing the financial solvency of the University College within the context of its long-term strategy and objectives.

Future Developments

It is expected that, with the support of Sponsor Department provided capital grant funding, the University

College will continue to invest in the upgrade of campus facilities aimed at progressing priorities identified in the most recent University College Estates Strategy. The most significant capital projects expected to progress during 2021-22 include a project to upgrade the campus Boundary Wall and Entrance Gates, the completion of the Nendrum Hall Upgrade Project and an investment in a new Library Services Platform. In addition, the University College continues to move forward its plans for the refurbishment of the campus outdoor sports facilities. Planning approval for the upgrade of the sports pitches has just recently been secured. A number of other Estates projects are also at the early stages of development and, it is hoped, that some of these works will be partially funded by the Sponsor Department in forthcoming years. However, at present there is uncertainty as to the availability and extent of future Sponsor Department capital funding beyond the end of March 2022.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

UCAS
355 AVERAGE
ENTRY
TARIFF
(2018-325 AVERAGE)



QAA SUCCESSFUL
and
QAA ASSESSMENTS



71%
ACADEMIC
STAFF WITH
DOCTORATES
(2018-£63%)

ECO
CAMPUS
STATUS

97%
STUDENT
SUCCESS RATE

97%
STUDENT
RETENTION
RATE

208
RESEARCH
OUTPUTS

£3.7m
CAMPUS INVESTMENT

£413k
POSTGRADUATE
& PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
FES
2018-£288k

Centre for
Research in
Educational
Underachievement
Established in 2018

VALUES

Our values are the foundation of our success and, as a College community, we are committed to:

- being student-focused: nurturing, developing and maximising the potential of every student
- pursuing excellence: demonstrating leadership in teaching, scholarship, research and professional practice
- championing collaboration: creating effective partnerships locally, nationally and internationally
- promoting social responsibility and respect: listening to and working with colleagues and the wider College community
- promoting entrepreneurship: delivering innovative programmes and projects, growing income and promoting good governance.

OUR MISSION

Since it was established in 1922, the College's mission has been clear:

"To transform the lives of children and young people through excellence in teaching, scholarship and research."

OUR VISION

To deliver that mission, and our vision to be the best specialist higher education institution in the field of teacher education and related professions and provide a lead in innovative professional practice.





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