

An auspicious anniversary

Dear Colleagues,

Today marks a very auspicious anniversary for our University. It was exactly 70 years ago today that we were honoured to be the first University to be granted a Royal Charter by the Queen, two months after her accession to the throne. The Royal Charter enabled Southampton for the first time to award its own degrees as a fully independent university, after many years as a degree-awarding branch of the University of London.

What is striking from reading about our origins is the palpable sense of ambition and purpose amongst our 100 staff and 1,000 students that day in 1952. The unwavering belief in the importance of education and research as the shadow of World War Two receded, and the exceptional people who taught, researched and studied at Southampton and then became part of our growing global network of alumni, and helped make it the remarkable institution it has now become.

Our staff community have been at the heart of our university from that day to this, creating an exceptional place to learn, work, innovate and create new knowledge. I am delighted that the annual **Staff Party** can return in person this year, providing an opportunity for us to gather together and to recognise all that our staff community have done over the last 70 years, and what I know you will continue to do into our future. We've missed many social occasions over the last two years, so I hope many of you will be able to attend this one - please do save the date, **Wednesday 29 June at 2pm**.

It is fitting that in this anniversary year we are embarking on a new chapter in our University's history, with our new [University Strategy](#). Many of you played a part in shaping that strategy and are now engaged in developing the underpinning strategic plans. All of you will play a part in helping us deliver it.

This is an exciting time of investment and growth for our University, as we look to the future, and emerge from a period of uncertainty and financial caution during the challenges of the pandemic.

Our strategy is clear: our People *are* our University and it is our people who will drive our Triple Helix, excellence and impact. That is why we are fully committed to prioritising investment in our people, so I was particularly delighted at the start of our anniversary year to launch our £4M **Anniversary Fellowships Scheme**, an exciting opportunity for at least 25 exceptional early-career researchers to advance their research careers as well as contributing more widely over the next five years. More than 600 applications have been received for the first intake of fellows, and we look forward to the interviews in July.

Over the last 18 months we have invested more than £7M in **additional academic staff** to support student number growth and address staff student ratios, and ensure an excellent student experience, and we will continue to invest in our academic staff as we meet our future ambitious growth targets. We are committed to investing to deliver our ambition to establish new, world-leading **interdisciplinary research centres** over the next 5 years, to improve **inclusivity in teaching** and learning, to strengthen our **wellbeing** support and activity, and to invest further in **training and skills**, the Centre for Higher Education Practice (CHEP), and in Doctoral College support.

We are also investing to strengthen our **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion** and **Sustainability** teams, to support and deliver these two critical elements of our new Strategy. We also intend to invest more in the capacity of our Professional Services teams as we strive for ever greater **organisational**

excellence, recognising that some teams simply do not have the capacity to meet the increasing demands for their expertise. We are investing significantly in better technology, and better use of our space, to enable the more **hybrid ways of working**, which will support some of your needs – as well as our own ambitions for growth.

It is equally important that we accelerate our investment in our enabling physical and digital infrastructure, to support our people, underpin a **transformative student experience**, and help us achieve operational excellence. That is why we have this year already agreed a £14M investment over the next five years in our **High Performance Computing**, to support the growing use of computational methods in our world-leading research, part of a £50M investment we intend to make in our critical **digital infrastructure** over the next 5 years. And that is why we will very shortly be announcing a major investment and improvement in our student **sports facilities**, including a major expansion of the Jubilee Sports Centre.

Over the next three months we will be finalising and sharing with you our long-term **estates masterplan**, to ensure all our campuses can meet the future needs of our students and staff, with new and refurbished buildings, with accessibility and sustainability at their core, underpinning our plan to reach net-zero across our estate and operations by 2030.

This masterplan will initially focus on the opportunities we can create in the North-East Quadrant area of Highfield, at the corner of Burgess and Broadlands Roads; the creation of a new Medical Health Research building, the centre-piece of our £100M Campaign for Southampton; how we will support growth in areas including the Business School and the Winchester School of Art; a new strategy for our student residences; how we will modernise and transform our library experience; how we will replace the Faraday Tower, due for demolition next year; and how we will best use the Boldrewood building formerly used by Lloyd's Register. A future phase of the masterplan will look at how we use the staff and student buildings at the heart of our Highfield campus.

Last weekend, to celebrate our 70th anniversary, it was wonderful to see the ABP Southampton Marathon and Half Marathon runners pounding through the heart of our Highfield campus, indeed I know a number of you took part yourselves. It was a fantastic symbol of the enduring relationship that our predecessors forged with our local community and our City, and one we plan to strengthen still further under our new Strategy.

Above all, today's 70th anniversary is a timely reminder that all of us, whatever our role, are custodians of an exceptional institution, one with a history we should all be proud of, and with a future I have every confidence will prove even more remarkable. Thank you for everything you do for our University.

Best wishes,
Mark

Professor Mark E. Smith
Vice-Chancellor
University of Southampton