

Forum explains latest on integration plans

Up to 140 staff members from the University of Tasmania and the Australian Maritime College attended a July information forum on the integration of the two institutions.

Held across two hours at the Newnham Campus, the forum updated staff on the progress with the integration, giving them the opportunity to question people leading the integration process.

Outlining the benefits of the merger, AMC President Professor Malek Pourzanjani said university status would give the College an advantage in the international market while retaining its distinctive identity and brand-name.

“Legislatively, the Australian Maritime College Act will be repealed and replaced with an Ordinance of UTAS to allow the integration; our Academic Board of Studies also will have a much closer link with the University’s Academic Senate.

“AMC staff will also be working much more closely with the faculties and academic units within UTAS.”

Professor Pourzanjani and the University’s Vice-Chancellor, Professor Daryl Le Grew, agreed that integration would pave the way for much-needed growth of the AMC and increasing the level of nationally and internationally-renowned research at Launceston.

The College needs to grow to twice the size, Professor Pourzanjani said. Integration funding provided by the Commonwealth Government is contributing to key new appointments which will underpin the excellence and growth agenda.

Professor Le Grew said that the AMC had been disadvantaged by the Nelson reforms of 2003.

“Its funding base was decreased by more than 20 per cent,” he said.

“There’s a need to increase student numbers and research to recoup that loss. We also need to realise savings and efficiencies through integration.

“That process has already begun as we cooperate to decrease the size of the AMC’s business and administrative services as the College will be supported by the University’s centralised administrative services.

“Those savings will go to the business end of the AMC, including courses and research.

“The Commonwealth has also provided significant funds under Collaborative Structural Reform and Commonwealth Developmental Pool funding in support of AMC and the integration process.”

Professor Le Grew also commented that the merger was not simply a matter of benefits for the AMC.

“UTAS will gain the advantage of the skills of the AMC staff and we will move forward together in teaching and learning,” he said.

“There will also be benefits under the new Resource Quality Framework arrangements; AMC staff will be joining the University researchers in four RQF research groups. This will enhance our research capabilities.”

Other matters covered by the forum included:

- **On administrative integration,** AMC Director Corporate Services and Registrar, David Crockett, said that 11 task groups were working to create as seamless a transition as possible in administrative procedures. Student support, property and library systems were now under a common management structure, and student residences, finances and student administration were well on the way;
- **Academically,** AMC Vice-President (Academic and Research) Tom Hardy said that AMC's distinctiveness and engagement with clients and industry was unique within higher education institutions in Australia and supported the UTAS EDGE agenda. He noted considerable opportunities for collaboration between AMC and UTAS, supported by funding to build on the academic power of AMC but said there were challenges where the institutions have overlapping areas – fisheries, environment and business;
- **Financially,** UTAS Executive Director Paul Barnett said that the future AMC institute would essentially have a one-line budget comprising all the income earned by AMC less central support costs, for internal allocation by AMC. The Budget Working Party is looking at how funding might be distributed to reflect the performance-based model of UTAS; it was important to establish links between performance and funding. He noted there would be a transition period of three years and AMC would be supported by a substantial injection of Commonwealth funds and strategic development funds from the University, particularly in areas of collaboration and where new business, growth for the future and additional income could be generated;
- **On staffing matters,** UTAS Director of Human Resources Stuart Andrews reiterated that there would be no forced redundancies. He indicated a preferred outcome where AMC enterprise agreements are terminated before integration, enabling AMC staff to move onto UTAS conditions of employment from the date of integration.

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