

Item 7

Resources and General Purposes Committee, 14 September 2020

This paper is to provide an update to members of the Resources and General Purposes Committee in relation to key organisational development activities. It also covers an update on work undertaken by the Brand Team since the last meeting of the Committee

Item 7.1 NCL Organisational Development Update

NCL Organisational Development Update

1 Welcome Back Programme

To mark the return of staff for the 2020/21 session, we held a programme of Welcome Back events on 10 & 11 August. This enabled a positive start to the session and encouraged staff to look forward, rather than back over the lockdown period, although we know that the effects of lockdown will be with us for some time to come.

There were 10 sessions over the two day programme, which focused on providing updates on important issues such as KPIs, SQA performance and updates on Health and Safety, as well as three forward looking sessions hosted by the Principal focusing on Students, Staff and Community. We launched the new website and the three new Student Presidents ran a session to introduce themselves to the wider NCL community. Day one finished with a musical performance our Music and Sound colleagues and the final day ended with a Campus Q&A with the Executive Board Campus Leads.

Most sessions averaged 400 participants, with good engagement from across the College. One of the challenges we have faced previously as an organisation of almost 1000 staff across six campuses is how to bring our diverse community together. One of the positive experiences of lockdown has been our developing ability to engage large numbers of staff digitally and this offers a continued potential to engage staff on a wide range of topics.

2 Staff Survey

As part of gathering information to assist us in supporting staff back on to campus at the appropriate time, we undertook a staff survey aimed at providing us with feedback on which staff members were in the higher risk groups, as well as general perceptions, feelings and concerns that staff may have in relation to a return to campus. The results of the survey have been released to line managers and this information will form the basis of an individual conversation with each member of staff to help us better understand the challenges they face and to accommodate their needs as best we can in the current circumstances.

3 Staff Orientation Visits

We considered that it was important to support staff in reconnecting to our campuses and to encourage a forwarding looking approach as we enter the new academic year. To help in this we invited staff into our campuses in small groups in week commencing 17 August, with each visit hosted by the relevant Executive Board Campus Leads.

Over the course of the week, 70 visits were held and approximately 600 staff attended across the five days. The purpose of the visits was threefold, to welcome staff back to the campuses, to provide an opportunity to take staff through our COVID precautions and associated works and to facilitate a Q&A with staff. All sessions were well received, some were very emotional as staff met colleagues for the first time since March, and all were constructive. We also used the visits as a controlled means of staff accessing workrooms to collect materials and resources, which was appreciated by many staff – particularly our academic colleagues as they prepared for blended delivery.

4 Teaching Qualification (Further Education) (TQFE) 2020/21

We continue to support our academic staff to undertake the TQFE award where they do not have this on joining NCL. This year we are supporting 16 staff to complete the TQFE via the University of Stirling, with a significant number being part-time permanent staff, or temporary staff in their first two years of service with us. The participants represent all six faculties and there is an equal gender split within the group.

The University will be holding teaching online for at least the first semester, so it will be an interesting experience and useful learning point for our TQFE cohort to be participants in digital learning as both students and as teachers within the same timeframe.

Item 7.2 NCL Brand Update

1. Digital Refresh – Website Phase 1

We have completed the first phase of our website overhaul, which has been to launch a new ‘look and feel’. Our previous site had been in place for almost 6 years and was in need of refreshing. The new streamlined look was launched at the beginning of August and feedback has been good, both internally and (more importantly) externally.

The focus for the work has been on the user’s experience. Our website remains the primary source of course information, so we have simplified the search function and have improved the layout and operation of course information pages. Further work is being undertaken to look at content and September will focus on a number of accessibility audits and updates to ensure consistency across the site.

The redesign has been led in-house, with some technical support provided externally as we are also taking the opportunity to review our web hosting arrangements, rather than rely on third party support. We do not host the site on our own infrastructure, which gives us more control and ability to make amendments quickly.

2. Campus Reopening 2020

At the moment the focus has been on 'return to campus' with the following being produced in partnership with teams across NCL:

- In-house design and coordination of all campus signage;
- Return to campus 'Student guide' / myday dashboard;
- Development and build a virtual Question Space utilising the college website and myday, with the primary feature being Livechat. This will go live the week students return to campus and will act as a virtual student hub, bringing a coordinated approach to delivery of student support services;
- Campus videos featuring one of our new Student Presidents showing the new signage measures in place and welcome students back to campus. Videos will be ready to push out to all students next week in w/c 7 September;
- Laptop Library 'sign up' campaign;
- By the time the Resources and General Purposes Committee meets, we will also have launched our Nationals and Highers programme online. This will be the first set of courses promoted as being delivered fully online.

In addition, we will have a focus on World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September, which is an important campaign for FE and HE, as students face the challenges of a new academic session and significant life changes, even without the additional context of a public health pandemic.

The Brand Team continue to lead the NCLfromHome staff engagement activity and internal communications.

Recruitment campaign work for 21/22 academic year will begin in September 2020.

3. Social Media

Our social media channels have also been an important means of communicating with our key audiences, but the period of lockdown has brought this into sharper focus and has largely become the primary means of engagement. Throughout this time a wide range of content has been posted including student recruitment, communications and engaging content that appealed to a varied audience.

Evidence indicates that our focus in this area has been worthwhile, with some of the key analytics highlighting that, the period from 15 March to 30 August:

Facebook 1500 new likes of our page
Over 3.8million impressions

Twitter 450 new followers
765k impressions from 15th March – 30th August

Instagram Doubled our following from 1250 followers to over 2500 . This is particularly welcome, as renewing our Instagram presence has been an important objective for the Brand Team in the past six months

4. Team Changes

After five years with us, our Communications Team Leader, left us in mid-August having been headhunted for a promoted role elsewhere. We are sorry to lose her, but wish her well in her new adventures.

We have appointed a temporary replacement, initially on a 12 month contract to support internal and external communications, and to work on the development of our public engagement work and wider profile. A qualified journalist, our new appointee has experience across the public and private sectors, with a number of industry awards for previous work. She will be with us from 7 September.

Brian Gilchrist

Assistant Principal: Organisational Development

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