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Mr. Ray White
President
University of Wales Lampeter

Dear Ray,

Thank you for your reply to my open letter. I am certain that all alumni are gratified by the responses from both the Vice Chancellor and yourself. There is no doubt that this is a new era in communications within the Lampeter community. We can all agree that we must work together closely for the benefit of the College.

Before responding to your letter, let me preface the reason for this debate.

Almost anyone who casts a reasoned eye on international affairs can see that the world requires new leadership that is ethically sound and highly trained in the liberal arts. We seem to be entering a dark period in politics and international relations and we need people inculcated with Lampeter values to be part of the process of determining a brighter future. This is the essential Lampeter project of the 21st century – the guiding principle of our moral mission, curriculum and management activity. We must challenge the Lampeter community to rise to this requirement and responsibility.

I'm sure that all alumni would like to learn your thoughts on this in your next communication. But in the meantime let me address a couple of your points.

1. It can't be accepted yet that the Council is peopled with excellent performers of all types. This just doesn't equate with my observations during two recent visits to Lampeter, where, despite the admirable efforts of the vice-chancellor, there is a grumbling staff, crumbling facilities, and the desperate fact of being rated last in the Guardian.

You haven't mentioned the names and qualifications of the Council members referred to in your letter, other than your own. Perhaps you could put their biographies, with educational, professional and career qualifications, on the Lampeter web site, including a personal statement from each describing why – on the basis of their experience - they believe they can make a contribution to the future of Lampeter. This would lend an impression of transparency to Lampeter's governance that would be reassuring to many of us. Otherwise we have to measure the Council member's accomplishments on observable results, and this isn't very encouraging at the moment.

Another obvious communications would be to publish at least an executive summary of the Strategic Plan for review and comment.

We should thank the Council members who give their time to further the development of Lampeter. But the primary requirement is to have relevant competencies and imaginative minds on the Council. Your response indicates an emphasis on specific functional expertise, which is important of course, but only part of the requirement to lead Lampeter into the future.

Having said that, we understand and appreciate your role in changing the administrative leadership of the College, which was long overdue, and I know from my own experience that change takes time and change in a academic institution probably takes longer than in a commercial or other type of public service institution. But it's time now to start measuring success or failure.

2. Although the university market has changed, other universities have adapted to it effectively. Each has their advantages and disadvantages, but some market their advantages better than others.

You note in your letter that Lampeter has a new marketing department. Are these people trained in marketing? Have they developed creative and imaginative programs? Do they take advantage of the all Lampeter resources in framing their marketing communications? Do they have direct experience in college or university recruitment, advertising, public relations, market segmentation, etc.? Or, if not, have they brought into Lampeter some of the alumni who possess this experience for consultation? Is there evidence so far that they have been able to articulate the Lampeter message – the significance of a Lampeter education – special and available only to the very few? It is one thing to say that there is a dynamic new marketing initiative, but another to measure the output and results.

As Robert Rosset put it so well in his recent letter on the 16 Club Returner's website, many of us feel quite blessed by our Lampeter educations and welcome the Welsh Assembly's initiative to broaden the pool of applicants so that many more can have the same opportunities we've had. However, we would also like to be assured that Lampeter has the reputation to attract the broadest pool of applicants. One of the reasons for broadening higher education opportunities is to permit students to mingle with others from different backgrounds and social classes. It will not serve our great purpose if there are no "A" A-level applicants or students from public schools or the best comprehensives in Lampeter. The issue of perception is critical in attracting a broad range of students, hence the importance of the Guardian rankings – and the necessity to improve Lampeter's rank immediately.

3. Fundraising is an important issue for reasons noted in my open letter. We await the Council's forthcoming deliberation. My opinion is that the alumni should have an

important role, perhaps even primary responsibility, with some level of administrative support from the College.

Thank you again for responding. I've been told by staff, students and alumni that they are reading the 16 Club Returner's web site for updates on these conversations. Stuart Tilley, webmaster, has noted a significant increase in the number of hits on the site. I hope you and Robert Pearce will read the thoughtful contributions from Rob Rosset and Brendan Somers, among others.

Cordially,

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