

# Goldsmiths, University of London

## Appointment of Warden – Consultation Summary

January 2019

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## Introduction

The appointment of the next Warden for Goldsmiths, University of London is the responsibility of the College's governing body, Council. This task has been delegated to a search committee, led by the Chair of Council, Dinah Caine. Perrett Laver were appointed, via a competitive invitation to tender in November 2018, to support the College with the search and selection process.

As part of the initial preparation for the appointment process, the search committee ran an online consultation and arranged a range of meetings with members of the Goldsmiths community. A number of individual meetings with senior College staff and external stakeholders were also facilitated. The in-person consultation meetings took place on the Goldsmiths campus over 5-13 December 2018, and approximately 150 individuals participated. Each meeting was chaired by a member of the search committee (or the University Secretary) and Kate Hunter and/or Zara Wright from Perrett Laver attended. The following groups of staff and students participated:

Representatives of UCU, UNISON, undergraduate and postgraduate students, the Students Union, Professional Services staff, the Senior Leadership Team, Heads of Department, Professoriate and Academic Board, members of the governing body and representatives from partner organisations in South East London.

The purpose of these meetings was to enable members of the Goldsmiths community to express their views about the context for the appointment of the Warden (the strengths of the institution the opportunities and challenges), the qualities and experience needed in the new Warden and their priorities for the new Warden's attention. The meetings were conducted on a Chatham House basis i.e. views could be reported but not attributed.

The online and in-person consultation has helped identify a clear set of attributes that the next Warden will embody, as well as providing a range of insights about the distinctiveness and priorities of the institution. The content of these meetings has informed the preparation of the: job description and person specification; the language used in the candidate pack and advert; thoughts on individuals external to the Goldsmiths community that may be relevant candidates for the role. The content of the meetings has also informed how elements of the recruitment process will be conducted (see Process section below).

## General Overview

1. The discussion groups demonstrated a clear desire on the part of some staff and students to engage in the Warden recruitment process, underlining a shared sense of values, identity and interlinked success. Across the stakeholders, there was a strong emphasis on adhering to a model of delivering higher education that promotes the values of Goldsmiths. There were diverse views on the strengths and reputation of the institution but all shared concerns about the long-term sustainability of the College, and a desire to preserve its distinctiveness and culture in the face of a very challenging external environment.
2. The strengths of Goldsmiths centre on a history of radicalism, creativity and innovative thought and practice, excellence in the arts and humanities and enduring commitment to social justice. There is a repeated articulation of embracing doing things differently, being proud of this difference, but some felt this can also inhibit Goldsmiths from evolving. Some remarked on a disconnect between the “reputation” and brand of the College and the reality of the student experience.
3. There was a universal acknowledgement that Goldsmiths has a global recognition that many other HEIs would be very envious of; however, there was also a sense of greater opportunities to explore internationally; more collaborations (such as LASALLE) and partnerships.
4. Research and being a research-led institution was valued. Staff saw scope for greater interdisciplinary collaboration and industrial engagement.
5. The size and shape of the College was discussed. Most staff felt that the current student body allowed for a close-knit community that was personal and approachable. Many worried that further growth would put greater strain on delivering a better and supportive student experience. The issue of student retention and support for vulnerable students (or those at risk of dropping out) was an issue of ethical and financial significance.
6. Many groups acknowledged the finances of the College were extremely challenging and debated how the institution could diversify income – aside from recruiting more students. Opportunities included greater emphasis on philanthropy, growing online/blended learning provision, commercial opportunities in relation to the estate.
7. In relation to students, many staff acknowledged that recent growth in student numbers has put greater pressure on infrastructure and support. Goldsmiths’ performance in the TEF and NSS was discussed, and the issues underlying these were of concern to staff.
8. In terms of academic portfolio, there were mixed views on the current programme. There were some strong voices advocating for building on and growing Goldsmiths’ strongest courses/areas; a serious consideration of the long-term viability of areas that are not high-performing; and not offering pale imitation of courses that other competitor institutions do better.
9. Public Engagement was seen to be a strength, both in terms of working in the South East London community on widening participation issues as well as engaging with local partners and agencies on issues around creativity, arts, teacher training and CPD.

## The next Warden

Some time was spent on discussing the type of leader that would be credible and effective at leading Goldsmiths.

1. There was a strong desire to have a Warden who aligns with the values of Goldsmiths and who will work effectively with the culture of the College. Someone with vision, who will inspire, motivate and lead was articulated as highly desirable.
2. While there was openness to explore leaders with a range of backgrounds, and from outside of higher education, the merits of having an academic leader were discussed and there was a high degree of support for this model. Someone who would be credible to the senior professoriate and who could address some of the core issues around research and a stronger student-centric approach to leadership would be valued.
3. The Goldsmiths community feels that it could benefit from a Warden who is a highly visible and public advocate for the institution, for its strengths and for the academic disciplines which characterise the College. Being an influential “voice” among the sector, wider public and political fora, and industries connected to the Goldsmiths’ portfolio would be advantageous.
4. There was consensus around a more externally facing leader who would build external relations and bring additional resource to the College, developing philanthropic, commercial, industrial and other relationships.
5. A strong commitment to equality and diversity is essential, and evidence of leadership in this area would be highly desirable. There was a desire to see somebody at the highest level within the institution “who looks like Goldsmiths”.
6. Strong proven leadership skills, financial acumen, personal resilience, excellent communications and influencing skills and emotional intelligence were skills and personal qualities that were mentioned regularly in relation to the Warden.
7. There were comments on the potential remuneration level for the Warden and a desire to see this lowered.

## Process

Staff and students made points about the transparency, the timing and the ongoing involvement of the Goldsmiths community in the recruitment process for appointing the next Warden. While some advocated that an election process would be their preference, many understood the need to design a process that would be both competitive and candidate-friendly, particularly in relation to attracting a diverse set of candidates, and that respecting the confidentiality of all candidates was a significant and sensitive consideration.

Regarding ongoing involvement, Perrett Laver has passed on feedback to the search committee regarding the appetite from staff and students for regular updates as the search progresses, while respecting candidates' confidentiality. We understand the search committee is very receptive to this and has agreed further steps to secure involvement from staff and students as the process continues.

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