

**BOARD MEETING**

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| **DATE:**  | May 2021 |
| **TITLE OF REPORT:** | Principal’s Update  |
| **AUTHOR AND CONTACT DETAILS** | Aileen McKechnie, Principal and CEO Aileen.McKechnie@slc.ac.uk  |
| **PURPOSE:** | To provide the Board with a summary of in year performance to date.  |
| **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS/ DECISIONS:**  | The Board is asked to:* Note the updates relating to staff, students, finance, health and wellbeing, as well as recruitment and marketing and comms.
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| **RISK**  | * That overall college attainment is impacted by COVID-19 and deferrals, with ensuing impact on student success and college reputation.
* That the financial deficit continues to increase due to unplanned spend on staffing, an increase in unpaid fees or other unforeseen expenditure.
* That the backlog maintenance funds are clawed back.
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| **RELEVANT STRATEGIC AIM:** | * Successful Students
* The Highest Quality Education and Support
* Sustainable Behaviours
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| **SUMMARY OF REPORT:** | * New staff appointed since last Board Meeting.
* Students have been returning to campus in a carefully managed way to support the conclusion of their learning.
* Finance update and forecast worst case scenario deficit of £253k.
* Note the final regional allocation for 2021-22.
* Backlog maintenance works have begun, and indications are that the SFC has softened its approach to when this should be spent, therefore reducing the risk of clawback. The COVID works project has been completed - aimed at increasing and improving teaching spaces.
* Cyber-attacks appear to be more prevalent in the sector, however SLC has appropriate protection and training in place.
* 2019-20 Performance Indicators (see Annex A) were published. The college performed well, however 2020-21 overall attainment will be lower due to FE FT provision.
* SLC has been successful as one of the four Scottish institutions to be involved in a pilot for tackling gender-based violence in partnership with the charity EmilyTest
* The college is firmly focussed on staff and student well-being and continues to reinforce health and safety measures. Staff are on campus on a rota basis.
* The HSE Organisational Stress Risk Assessment was launched and is being delivered in partnership with an external organisation to aid anonymity as well as to allow us to reach out individually to gain further insight. Return rate was high at 83%.
* Applications are lower than currently last year - 16% down with PT courses slower to recruit.
* Consideration progressing in relation to a refresh of our marketing and brand awareness and associated re-build of our website.
* Press releases and staff newsletters have been shared with Board members to demonstrate the continued positive engagement to date.
* Lord McConnell to visit and launch our External Wall Insulation Academy on 11 June.
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1. **INTRODUCTION**
	1. This paper provides an overview of South Lanarkshire College (SLC) business to date since March 2021, aligned to our strategic priorities.
2. **SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS: STAFF, STUDENTS**
	1. New staff - since the last Board meeting, and following a rigorous external recruitment process, the college has appointed David Innes as the new Associate Principal of Construction and the Built Environment. David is currently the Associate Principal Engineering, Computing and the Built Environment at Glasgow Clyde College, and brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience in that field.
	2. Students – the College remained open for critical teaching, learning and assessment from January and we have, over recent weeks, been increasing the number of students, and associated staff, on campus – entirely in line with Scottish Government guidance – with the ambition of concluding as many of our students as possible and reducing the number of students deferring into August 2021.
3. **SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**
	1. The Finance Committee received an update indicating that the forecast outturn shows a projected deficit of £253k, which has slightly worsened from the last update in March 2021 by £54k. This is due to a higher than normal level of unpaid fees as well as payroll continuing to run marginally over budget.
	2. This deficit, which is £60k under what was anticipated in the original budget, is regarded as a worst-case scenario, and assumes that any additional funding (£379k) received by the college from the SFC to support with COVID related challenges in late March 2021, will be spent fully in the financial year. Any underspend would be utilised to offset the deficit. It was also noted that the College would be looking to match income received to meet any costs relating to where 2020/21 activity must be delivered in 2021/22, as far as possible.
	3. In addition, the college’s risk register has been updated, and further work will continue to be invested in risk management to ensure regular review and responsiveness to the fast-changing external climate.
	4. The final funding allocations for the 2021-22 academic year were published on 27 May 2021. The overall credit target including ESF, the new Foundation Apprenticeship credits and additional funding for deferred students has increased slightly by 2.6% in comparison to this year. Next steps are to meet with New College Lanarkshire to agree the funding split. Annex A provides a further breakdown and an overview of the sector.
4. **SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS**: **FACILITIES AND ESTATES**

Backlog Maintenance Works Update

* 1. Equipment for this project has been delivered and the contractor has started work on the air conditioning system, focussing on areas, such as business support, that do not impact directly on students to ensure no impact on teaching and learning at this critical time in the academic calendar.
	2. Indications are that the SFC has softened its approach to when this funding requires to be spent, and the risk regarding clawback appears to have reduced.
	3. The return to campus learning project to create larger teaching spaces has been completed. This was funded from the SFC COVID monies.
1. **SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS: APPROPRIATE RISK MANAGEMENT**
	1. The College’s risk register is under review and has been recently updated. Further work will continue to be invested in risk mitigation and management to ensure we remain responsive to the fast-changing external climate**.**
	2. A key current risk relates to cyber security. Educational institutions such as Glasgow Caledonian University and City of Glasgow College have been subject to recent cyber-attacks. We are currently working in line with the guidance from HEFESTIS, a not for profit shared service organisation owned jointly by member institutions across the Scottish university and college sectors, JISC and the Scottish Government’s Framework for a Cyber Resilient Scotland, to maintain and monitor the threats to education IT infrastructure on a daily basis.
	3. In addition, our IT team receives further intelligence from their sector groups on any recent attacks and makes it a priority to adjust our protections/mitigations as soon as we know about them. This includes running a security audit every quarter and the Cyber Essentials Plus audit each year to verify we are working to a high standard. We are aware that a cyber-attack remains a possibility so our team have also had training on incident response and how to deal with a major incident should it occur. This is also reviewed quarterly.
2. **HIGHEST QUALITY EDUCATION AND SUPPORT**

2019-20 Published Confirmed Attainment

* 1. The Scottish Funding Council confirmed last year’s performance indicators slightly later than usual in March 2021. Overall, the college should be pleased with last year’s results in these challenging times. The table below show an overview of attainment for 2019-20.
	2. Table 1: Confirmed 2019-20 Attainment All Modes

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Mode** | **No. Completed Successful** | **%**  | **Competed Partial Success** | **%** | **Further Withdrawal** | **%** | **Early Withdrawal** | **%** | **Total** | **National Rates %** |
| FE FT | 956 | 71.4 | 145 | 10.8 | 118 | 8.8 | 120 | 9 | 1,339 | 65.2 |
| FE PT | 1,242 | 78.4 | 167 | 10.5 | 121 | 7.6 | 55 | 3.5 | 1,585 | 79.7 |
| HE FT  | 806 | 77.9 | 91 | 8.8 | 82 | 7.9 | 55 | 5.3 | 1,034 | 69.8 |
| HE PT | 292 | 85.6 | 17 | 5 | 18 | 5.3  | 14 | 4.1  | 341 | 78.9 |

* 1. It is expected that overall college attainment for 2020-21 will decrease due to the number of students withdrawing from their courses or not fully completing their qualifications due to the challenges they have faced during lockdown, despite the significant support being received from the college. The main area of concern is FE FT as most of the retention issues are in this mode of provision. It is expected that the college attainment for this mode will be on or just above national rates. Overall college retention currently stands at 90.2%, which is 2.4% above year end retention for last year, with early and further withdrawals standing at 3.6% (2019-20 5.3%) and 6.2% (2019-206.8%) respectively.
	2. The Curriculum, Quality and Development Committee noted the significant work being been done by faculties and the Quality Team to support students to achieve their qualifications. As such it is expected that only 10% of FT and PT students will need to defer the qualification into the next academic year, and it is hoped to further reduce this number. For work-based learning students, the deferrals are higher at 48% which is due to them not being able undertake on site assessments.
	3. Planning is still ongoing for August 2021 and the sector continues to lobby the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council regarding physical distancing measures. We are hopeful that this may be possible by the next academic session.
1. **STAFF WELL-BEING**
	1. We are now able to work at level 3 restrictions, which should mean being able to have approximately 33% of students on campus. It should be noted that (a) this is still only about 1,650 students on campus daily out of a possible approximate 5,000; and (b) that we have not yet reached this maximum.
	2. The college has had a carefully staged and managed return to campus and has been mindful of both staff and students’ well-being at all stages of this transition. As more staff and students have returned to campus, we have reinforced our existing COVID precautions. The college was also mindful of how staff, who had not been on campus for some time, would feel about returning, and regular communications such as videos were sent out to show what they could expect and to highlight all the mitigations that had been put in place. The Principalship also held some welcome back meetings with teams, which was a great way for staff to ask any questions or feedback on anything that they might wish to know more about. Many staff were excited to be back on campus and to be with their colleagues, though we recognise some instances of anxiety which are being supported. Note, all staff including, curriculum and business support, are in college on a rota basis to ensure the numbers are carefully managed and physical distancing maintained.
	3. In addition, the college, like the rest of the sector, has rolled out voluntary free lateral flow Covid testing twice a week to all staff and students. This provides another level of security for our staff and students.
	4. The College launched its Organisational Stress Risk Assessment at the end of April to gauge what further support is needed for staff at the college. It is being run by an external organisation which ensures anonymity when completing and allows for anonymous interaction should the college wish to gather additional insights or offer further support to individual staff members. The impact of lockdown has had a significant impact on staff, and this will enable the college to provide targeted support. We are very pleased to have recorded a response rate of 83%. Work is now in train to analyse responses and to provide communications to staff on proposed next steps.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) Charter Pilot Application

* 1. Within Student Services, we have already undertaken a great deal of work in relation to the prevention of gender-based violence. As such we recently submitted an application to work in partnership with EmilyTest, a charity which aims to improve prevention, intervention and support concerning gender-based violence (GBV) in further and higher education, on a new pilot due to launch in May tackling the issue of GBV. Our submission outlines all the support and activity that has been undertaken to date and highlights the college’s zero tolerance approach to gender-based violence. We are delighted to confirm that we received confirmation on 26 April that we have been selected as one of the four Scottish pilot institutions and this pilot is currently in train.
1. **Recruitment Key** **Headlines**
	1. Much work continues to be undertaken to ramp up our recruitment drive for the 2021-22 academic session. As well as our normal campaigns (Annex B), SLC is also participating in the College Development Network’s Virtual Showcase (#ChooseCollege), aimed at highlighting the great work that the college sector undertakes in preparing students for future or new careers. Students and prospective students were able to sign up for this event and listen to ten colleges (including SLC) describe what they have to offer future applicants.
	2. Good progress has been made since March 2021, when it was reported that the college was 30% down on applications in comparison to this time last year. At the time of writing, applications were now 16% down. Whilst FT applications are almost in line with last year, it is our PT courses which have been slower to recruit. There is a mixed picture across the college sector, with some colleges, such as West of Scotland and North East College Scotland reporting a similar (20%) decrease in applications, whereas other colleges are reporting only a slight decrease (or on par) in applications year-on-year.
2. **Marketing and Communication**
	1. We are pleased to announce that SLC has been shortlisted as a finalist for the Herald Higher Education Awards in the Outstanding Business of the Year Category. The submission was based on our innovative approach to delivering employers’ workforce development needs and detailed our partnership with South Lanarkshire Council to upskill Lanarkshire’s care sector workers. The online event takes place on 17 June 2021.
	2. The Marketing Team has bene analysing website traffic and reviewing its efficacy, and new users to the website continue to decline - down by 1% for the period 1 February 2021 – 5 April 2021 in comparison to last year. As noted at our last Board meeting, we are in the early stages of considering our approach to refreshing our marketing and brand awareness, which will include a re-build of our website, to ensure it meets the needs of all our stakeholders. Updates on progress will be provided in due course.
	3. In the meantime, website updates and improvements are ongoing, such as streamlining the number of pages, as well as reviewing the content. As part of the improvement to the website content, a virtual campus tour can now be found [here](https://www.south-lanarkshire-college.ac.uk/360-virtual-tour/).
	4. Our new fortnightly newsletter continues to receive positive feedback and is now being circulated to all Board members for their information.
	5. There continues to be a range of positive press for the college and a full list of press articles are in Annex B.
3. **GOOD NEWS STORIES**
	1. SLC has been awarded £150k from the SSE Sustainable Development Fund for its External Wall Insulation Academy. Our project supports the green job recovery and promotes Scotland’s green agenda. SSE is one of the sponsors of COP26. The Chair of the SSE Sustainable Development Fund, Lord McConnell, has selected the college as the base to announce the other successful applicants. We are delighted that our project and facilities will be showcased through this event, due to take place on 11 June.
	2. The Principal has been invited to Chair the inaugural review of the Donegal Education and Training Board, work on which commenced on 24 May. She has also been invited to participate in the Open University in Scotland’s External Advisory Board.

**ANNEX A**



**ANNEX B**

***Recruitment Activity***

This includes a range of integrated activities, which are currently in place and are listed below, please click on the link for more detail.

* [Paid social campaign](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wKdhT6cOaJT9ROko4GzCASLvjfKYl4hp/view?usp=sharing) (Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Google Ads/ retargeting and Youtube)
* Organic social activity
* [Go Radio](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Wqet5pyfnjKxzfzV527Y6kcx5wtA6GUu/view?usp=sharing) and [Pure Radio](https://drive.google.com/file/d/14oK3xmsgHyJOMz7hMrfAFQPqhca0X2cc/view?usp=sharing) adverts and evening sponsorship
* [Outdoor advertising](https://drive.google.com/file/d/19zY4pxm5kW50uqvJJy0oYyxpEpQPr7kh/view?usp=sharing)
* [Door drop](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E0Rgi77BMymDPnBN0hxV72D0Nod3WJc-/view?usp=sharing) – 21,470 South Lanarkshire addresses circulated w/c 15 March
* Advertorial content – see [Look to your future](https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk/special-features/time-look-future-plan-career-19814645) for an example
* New banners around the campus.
* Direct communications to schools, Skills Development Scotland careers guidance service, partners and enquiries.
* [Press advertising](https://drive.google.com/file/d/19zY4pxm5kW50uqvJJy0oYyxpEpQPr7kh/view?usp=sharing)
* Hamilton Academical FC advertising: including pitch side board, Hamilton TV, ad, interview flash and website presence (this is currently in production)
* Supporting the [#ChooseCollege](https://www.cdn.ac.uk/choose-college-2021/) National college sector campaign

***Press Activity***

Examples of press activity in the past 3 months include the following articles, note that these are hyperlinks which can be clicked on to review the content of each article.

* [Pandemic has provided much food for thought at South Lanarkshire College](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19214922.pandemic-provided-much-food-thought-south-lanarkshire-college/)
* [Your opportunity to find out more about college study](https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk/special-features/your-opportunity-find-out-more-19994917) (advertorial)
* [South Lanarkshire College welcomes new depute principal](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/south-lanarkshire-college-welcomes-new-23437571)
* [SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COLLEGE PREPARE TO WELCOME BACK STUDENTS](https://www.heraldscotland.com/business_hq/19215240.south-lanarkshire-college-prepare-welcome-back-students/) (also in offline local press)
* [Boost your skills with South Lanarkshire College courses](https://www.scotsman.com/education/boost-your-skills-south-lanarkshire-college-courses-3137712) (advertorial)
* [How South Lanarkshire College puts the focus on skillsets that click with employers](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19130387.south-lanarkshire-college-puts-focus-skillsets-click-employers/)
* [More options on the route to employment with South Lanarkshire College](https://www.heraldscotland.com/business_hq/19090457.options-route-employment-south-lanarkshire-college/)
* [Funding available to upskill your career at South Lanarkshire College](https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk/special-features/funding-available-upskill-your-career-20330683) (advertorial)
* [Opportunity flows from ‘skills pipeline’](https://www.heraldscotland.com/business_hq/19078597.opportunity-flows-skills-pipeline/)
* [Lanarkshire college teams up with university to offer accounting degree qualification](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/in-your-area/lanarkshire/lanarkshire-college-teams-up-university-23882711)