



UCL (University College London)

Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT

Direct Line: 0207 679 7234 Fax: 0207 388 5412 Email: provost@ucl.ac.uk

Provost and President, Sir Derek Roberts, FRS

7th April 2003

Mr Richard Lambert
Lambert Review of Business - University Collaboration
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

Dear Mr Lambert

Thank you for your letter of 3 February 2003. I would like to make a few general points, which I hope address your questions:

1. Involving employers in defining skills requirements:

- In medicine; engineering; architecture and planning our undergraduate programmes are already subject to scrutiny and comment by the relevant professional bodies.
- Our business is primarily to educate - for life, and a great diversity of career paths - not simply to build skills. The diversity of career paths - and of views amongst potential employers makes it difficult to establish "employer's views".
- A decade ago we made a major commitment to the Enterprise in Higher Education scheme to develop personal transferable skills amongst all our graduates. This was very successful, and we involved leading players in the finance sector.
- An excellent way of building university: employee links is through undergraduate sponsorship. I develop this theme in the attached paper (dated December 1998). Sadly this has declined, as did the employers commitment to "sandwich" courses.
- We do have programmes at M.Sc level, which are tuned to specific employers - BT, GEC Marconi/BAE, and, in the case of biochemical engineering with the global pharmaceutical industry.

2. Technology Transfer - via consultancy, licensing and spin-out companies:

- In dealing with existing companies, the situation is as spelt-out on pages 2-6 of my December 1998 paper. Attention needs to be focussed on the "receivers".
- A decade ago we set up CAIS - the Centre for Advanced Instrumentation Systems - to work with SIRA in an early "Faraday Centre" - and to develop relations with the instrumentation market sector. This works well, has lead to collaborative research and Teaching Company Scheme projects. Incidentally, TCS is a great scheme, grossly under-used by industry.

- A decade ago we set up an organisation which developed into UCL Business. This uses people with industrial experience to build active bridges between academia, industry and VC companies, in the areas of consultancy, licensing and spin-off. This area of activity has benefited particularly in the last few years from the University Challenge Fund and HEIF. The major problem we are now experiencing is that the £250K project limit on the UCF is too low (by a factor of 2-3) in the biotech sector. We have drawn the attention of Lord Sainsbury and the LDA to this.
 - Another excellent scheme is the Scientific Enterprise Challenge. In collaboration with the London Business School we set up the Centre for Scientific Enterprise, which later spawned the London Technology Network, and is now discussing with the LDA the creation of a London Innovation Centre.
 - As an aside, the arbitrary intervention by the Chancellor to provide **massive** funding for MIT through the Cambridge – MIT Institute was not well thought out. Particularly ironic in the light of his public utterances on “elitism” and the competence of university management.
 - As a further aside I am worried by the idea of the RDAs getting involve in HEIF. Why is it assumed that they are competent so to do? The White Paper talks about reducing the bureaucracy affecting universities, and promptly adds another layer.
3. Good academic staff are already grossly underpaid and overstretched. In addition they are now expected to sort-out the problems resulting from 40 years incompetent political interventions in 5 – 18 year old education, and issues of poverty and ethnicity – and now to go out and change the hearts and minds of the SMEs. I would like to see Government and Industry accepting more of what should be **their** responsibilities, in partnership with universities.
- I would also like to see less ill informed comments on university management. The track record of UK industry – and of the Treasury in their handling of the economy over the last 50 years compares badly with the way the UK research universities have maintained an international research presence, in spite of decades of under-funding and salary erosion.

I look forward to meeting you on the 28 April.

Meanwhile,

Best regards

Yours sincerely

Sir Derek Roberts, FRS
Provost and President