AQUINAS COLLEGE
GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Date: 23 January 2024
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Mr L Byrne, Mr P Horton, Mr T McGee, Mr M Matthew, Mrs J Miller, Dr A Smith and Mr M Taylor.

Mr P Horton in the Chair

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr D Pearson Principal Mr A Bailey Vice Principal

1. OPENING PRAYER/REFLECTION

The meeting began with a prayer led by Mr Horton.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr G Hynes and Mr I Ishaq.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Governors and Staff were asked to declare any interest, which they may have in any of the items on the Agenda for this meeting. No interests were declared.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2023 copies of which had been circulated previously be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising that were not covered by the agenda for the meeting.

6. ADMISSIONS 2024/2025

Mr Pearson updated Governors on the latest position regarding admissions for 2024/2025.

There had been 1173 Category 1 applications and they had been interviewed over the telephone before the end of November 2023. The interview is to give students advice about entry requirements and courses available at the college. The number of applications was similar to last year.

The closing date for Category 2 applications was 30 November 2023 and 1659 applications had been received which was the highest number ever received. Prior to the interviews the student's applications are classified as follows:

i) excellent, ii) good or iii) requires improvement. The interviews should be completed soon and offers will be made by the February half term. Those students classed as excellent (355) would not be interviewed but directly offered a place. A similar number would not be offered an interview based on their poor application.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that between 15 – 18 staff had been involved in the interview process. This had meant that each member had undertaken 15 interviews in a session of 2.5 hours. Staff tend to do 4 sessions each. There are 138 students still to have an interview.

On the census date in October 2023 there were 2421 students, which is the number that the college is funded for in 2024/2025. The college usually aims to grow by between 20-40 students. The aim for next academic year will be to have 2450 students on roll in September 2024. An additional 30 students gives the college an additional £150,000 in income. The college is significantly above its built capacity, the original building was for 1850 students to be on site at any time but we have made the most of the timetabling flexibilities to ensure this figure is not exceeded.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that there are 48 late Category 1 and 102 late Category 2 applications. These will be held and looked at before any offers are made. A Governor asked is there any particular reason for the late applications. Mr Pearson replied that the college sends reminders to its feeder schools about the closing date for applications. Some may be students who have moved into the area, others are students who have just left it late to submit an application. The interviews should be completed soon and appropriate offers will be made by the February half term.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the new build will increase the capacity at the college but is unlikely to be completed in time for the start of the next academic year. A more realistic date is after the October 2024 half term, if everything goes well. The college does not want to include the new build for timetabling arrangements. It is hoped that the contactors will be on site by the end of February 2024. A series of contract agreements have still to be signed and agreed before the college has a fixed price for the new build. It is hoped that it will remain within budget.

An update on the admission numbers will be given at the Governing Body meeting on 19 March 2024.

Mrs Miller and Mr Bailey joined the meeting whilst this item was being discussed.

8. STUDENT DESTINATIONS

Mr Pearson introduced a paper that had been circulated to Governors which showed the destination of students who had left the college at the end of the 2022/2023 academic year.

Governors' attention was drawn to the Executive Summary in the report which showed the following:

a) 1131 students who had completed a level 3 course left the college in 2023. Additionally, 6 students also completed their studies who were on level 2 courses.

b) 60.4% of students progressed straight to higher education courses, whilst 15.7% progressed to either an apprenticeship or employment. The remaining 23.9% of students took a gap year, an FE course as well as some currently seeking opportunities.

c) The Final UCAS reports students completing level 3 qualification and accepting a place at university was 683.

Female acceptances – 368 (53.9%)

Male acceptances – 291 (42.6%)

Prefer not to say – 24 (3.5%)

51 Students deferred entry to university for 2024

Total number of students gaining a place at a university was 734 students

Number of students who gained entry to their first choice – 578 (84.6%) a decrease from last year (598).

d) 194 students accepted places at Russell Group Universities which was 28.4% of total number of acceptances to universities. This is a decrease from last year 202 students (30.0%) of total acceptances.

e) Oxford and Cambridge places – 5 students.

f) Universities in northern cities continue to be the most popular with Aquinas students. Once again Manchester Metropolitan University is again the most popular university with 96 students progressing onto a higher education degree course. Other popular universities were University of Salford 71, Sheffield Hallam 51, University of Sheffield 37, Leeds Beckett 32, University of Liverpool 28, Liverpool John Moores University 27 and Lancaster University 22.

g) Students from the college went onto 89 institutions compared to 88 in the previous year.

h) 118 students out of a total of 175 who identified as anything other than White British (67.4% of cohort) progressed onto higher education. This compares to last year, with 126 students out of 167 (74.4%).

i) 122 students out of a total of 218 who identify as from a “widening participation background” (55.9% of their cohort) progressed onto higher education. This compares to last year, with 129 students out of 195 (66%).

j) Governors noted that 56 students started apprenticeship compared with 59 in the previous year.

k) 48.9% of students who left are based in the North West.

l) Aspire students who participated during the first cohort (2021/2022), 43 out of 78 completed their studies in Summer 2023. 57.3% of those students progressed to either university or employment.

m) There were 181 other, students who do not fit in one of the other categories.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that most student were staying in the North West due to the financial pressures that families are facing. Mrs Miller wondered how many students explored the opportunities of moving away from the area. Mr Taylor added that there are a large number of good universities within the North West and easily accessible. Mr Matthew replied that it was for social economic reasons that students remain close to home.

Mr Taylor asked if many students went to universities abroad. Mr Byrne added that for many courses it does not make sense to go abroad i.e to go to France to study law.

A discussion took place on a) Widening Participation and Governors noted that the numbers had increased to 218 from 195 in 2022, whilst the number in 2021 was 121 and b) Low Prior Attainment, the number had reduced to 108 from 127 in 2022 and 258 in 2021.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the way in which universities welcome students plays a large part in determining which university a student will choose.

RESOLVED: That the Student Destination Overview for 2023 be noted.

9. PUBLICITY

Mr Pearson advised Governor that the college had decided to update its website and that work on the new website was 75% complete. The timing of when to switch over to the new website had still to be determined.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Governor noted that this was the last meeting that Mr Matthew (Student Governor) would be attending. Governors thanked him for his contribution to the meetings and wished him all the best for his future studies.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is 2 July 2024 at 4.30pm.

Signed _____ Date _____

Chairperson