HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY, GOVERNANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

Senior consultancy support for higher education

We are higher education leaders and consultants, with experience at senior and executive level in universities and in the business and civic organisations that work alongside them.

Between us we cover institutional strategy and planning, governance and board effectiveness, revenue and market development, partnerships and stakeholder engagement, reputation and communications, and fundraising and supporter engagement.

Start a conversation

See what we do →

Having held senior roles within universities ourselves, we understand the realities of delivering change in complex institutions: how to keep a strategy moving amid competing priorities and constrained resources, and how to build genuine buy-in across an organisation.

Our particular strength is combining strategic thinking with practical implementation.

Why bring in external support?

Universities do not always need a large consultancy assignment or an additional permanent post. Sometimes what is needed is experienced, trusted senior support for a defined period or project.

We offer a flexible alternative to larger consultancy models: senior-level expertise, direct involvement throughout the work, and an approach tailored to the institution and the challenge rather than a standard methodology.

01 Take a strategy from evidence through board approval to a delivery plan

02 Add senior resource around an important strategic priority

03 Bring independent challenge and an external perspective

04 Accelerate projects where internal capacity is limited

05 Carry out focused reviews and benchmarking

06 Provide experienced leadership through a period of change or transition

Because we know the sector and have operated within universities at senior level, we get to the heart of an issue quickly, work effectively with Vice-Chancellors, executive teams, governors and professional services leaders, and turn strategic decisions into operational delivery.

Areas of expertise

Strategy, performance and institutional planning

End-to-end strategy development and delivery: internal and stakeholder engagement, data analysis, benchmarking and opportunities analysis, narrative development, KPIs and lead indicators, navigating board approval, and the linked delivery plans that turn an agreed strategy into action. We also review and refresh existing strategies and build the performance monitoring frameworks that keep them on track.

Governance, assurance and organisational review

Independent review of governance, organisational structures, teams, systems and processes, including board effectiveness, assurance and reporting. We identify what is working, where change is needed, and provide clear, proportionate and practical recommendations.

Revenue, growth and market development

Identifying and evaluating opportunities to grow and diversify income: portfolio review, new programme development, online and international markets, apprenticeships and short courses, alongside market research, competitor analysis, pricing, and tuition-fee and financial-support benchmarking.

Partnerships, civic and stakeholder engagement

Developing the partnerships and relationships that strengthen institutional reach, reputation and impact: civic, employer and business, FE-HE, academic, international and sector. Support ranges from stakeholder mapping and opportunity development through to implementation and partnership review. These are live networks rather than past contacts: one of us currently leads a London chamber of commerce.

Reputation, communications and marketing

Institutional positioning, brand, marketing, PR and media relations, internal and crisis communications, campaigns and events, including the marketing, conversion and applicant communications that underpin student recruitment. We have both held director-level roles spanning communications, marketing and external relations.

Fundraising, alumni and supporter engagement

Strategy and delivery across fundraising, donor development and stewardship, alumni relations and supporter engagement, building the relationships that generate philanthropic income while strengthening reputation, partnerships and opportunities for students and graduates.

How we work

Our support can range from a short, focused piece of advice or an independent review through to a substantial strategic project or a period of embedded senior-level delivery. Typically we work in four ways.

Review and recommend

An independent assessment, benchmarking exercise, strategic or operational review, or options appraisal, leading to clear, evidence-based recommendations.

Develop and design

Working alongside institutional colleagues to develop strategies, propositions, partnerships, programmes or new approaches.

Deliver and implement

Experienced additional resource to turn an agreed direction into action, lead projects and maintain momentum.

Advise and challenge

An experienced external perspective, constructive challenge and a trusted sounding board for senior leaders as plans and priorities develop.

These often combine. A piece of strategy work may begin as a review, move into development, and continue through to delivery and implementation.

Our aim is not to produce a report. It is to help institutions reach clear decisions, make real progress, and come away with practical next steps and stronger capability to carry the work forward.

Who we are

We worked alongside one another in senior roles at the University of Roehampton.

Eleanor Merrick

Eleanor has over 25 years' experience in higher education, stakeholder engagement, communications and fundraising. She was most recently Director of Business Development, Alumni and Fundraising at the University of Roehampton.

She is currently Chief Executive of Merton Chamber of Commerce, and her consultancy work is firmly rooted in expanding opportunities for social, civic and business communities across London.

RECENT PROJECTS

An impact and evaluation commission working with stakeholders spanning education, local government and industry.

LinkedIn →

Liam Hurley

Liam's expertise focuses on strategy development and engagement, governance effectiveness and assurance, revenue strategies, and external relations and communications. With clients in higher education and the commercial sector, Liam has over 20 years' experience in the university sector, most recently as Executive Director of Strategy and External Relations at the University of Roehampton. He is a trustee of Wimbledon Bookfest, London's leading literature festival.

RECENT PROJECTS

End-to-end development of an institutional strategic plan, a board effectiveness review for a major UK university, and a market entry opportunities report for a leading educational services company.

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