

## **The Future of Heythrop College – Friday, 26 June 2015**

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### **Summary**

Heythrop's Governing Body met yesterday to discuss the future of the College.

This meeting was the culmination of detailed work over the past three years, as Governors, working in close collaboration with the Society of Jesus, and in consultation with HEFCE, have been researching ways in which Heythrop's mission and work might continue in today's higher education environment.

At its meeting, the Governing Body has concluded that the College in its current form, as a constituent college of the University of London, will come to an end in 2018, although its mission and work will not.

Both the Governors and the Society of Jesus are committed to finding a way in which the mission and work of the College, including the ecclesiastical faculties, will continue in a new form after 2018.

Further detail is contained in the statement below.

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### **Statement from the Principal of Heythrop College, following 25 June Governing Body meeting**

Heythrop's mission is to serve society through philosophy and theology; to offer its students an education marked by intelligence, scholarship and generosity of spirit; to foster interfaith dialogue; to be a resource for the Christian faith community, and to provide leadership in Catholic thought.

Since its move from Oxfordshire in 1970, Heythrop has been a constituent college of the University of London. During those 45 years, the College has made a very considerable contribution to the Academy, to the life and ministry of the Church in this country and overseas and to the common good.

- The College has educated a great many students at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels. They have benefitted from the commitment and enthusiasm of those who have taught them and from the personal and formative approach to learning which characterises the Jesuit tradition of education the world over.

- Among Heythrop's past students are many bishops, priests, teachers and other ministers of the Catholic Church together with men and women of other Christian denominations, of other faiths and of no faith whose studies have enriched their contributions to their communities and the common good.
- The results of the REF2014 (the six-yearly national survey of research quality in universities in the UK) which were released just before Christmas show a significant proportion of Heythrop's research, its research environment and the impact of its research is world-leading and we are justly proud of this.

However, the College has never been much larger in terms of student numbers than an average-sized university department and as a result maintaining it as an autonomous institution has been a challenge.

In the last ten years, the College has had to provide for the costs of increased regulatory requirements without the economies of scale available to other colleges and universities. Expectations of all that makes up the "student experience" in addition to the quality of teaching and learning (for example, facilities, the technology infrastructure, internships and activities) have also increased and meeting these expectations has become more costly too. Meanwhile, government reforms have meant that the market for students has become more competitive and, specialising in just two subject areas as we do, the opportunities to diversify have been limited.

Throughout the past 45 years, Heythrop has continued to enjoy the very generous support of the Society of Jesus. For example, the Society provides the property we use in Kensington Square rent-free, reimburses the costs of Jesuit members of staff and provides an annual grant to underpin the operation of the College. These grants in recent years have amounted to several millions of pounds, but the Society's capacity to continue to bridge the gap between income and expenditure is understandably limited and there are now fewer Jesuits available to work at a subsidised rate.

For the past three years, the Governors of the College, working in close collaboration with the Society of Jesus, and in consultation with HEFCE, have been researching ways in which Heythrop's mission and work might continue in these challenging circumstances. The Governors have looked in detail at income and expenditure, at a number of alternative models of remaining an autonomous college of the University of London as well as at partnerships with other universities.

Most recently we have been holding discussions with St Mary's University, Twickenham. We are very grateful to the Governors, the Vice Chancellor and

the Senior Leadership Team of St Mary's, for the time and attention they have generously given over the past year to exploring a strategic partnership.

All in all, the research we have done has shown that opportunities for increasing income and cutting expenditure are limited and that the resources (including personnel and finances) needed to remain in our current form, or to form a partnership with another university, including St Mary's, are, in today's higher education environment, greater than the College, the Society of Jesus in Britain and our friends can provide.

Consequently, after much reflection, and with great sadness, the Governors of Heythrop decided at their meeting on 25 June that Heythrop College, University of London, will continue for the next three years and then cease to be a College of the federal University. By the summer of 2018, we will have fulfilled our commitments to our present students and to those who will commence study in September 2015. The Governors and the Society are committed to finding a new form in which the mission and work of the College, including the ecclesiastical faculties which are of such importance to the Church in Britain, will continue after 2018.

In the meantime, we at Heythrop will continue to do what we have always done: we shall concentrate in the years ahead on giving our students the very best experience we can. In this regard, Governors are grateful to the Society of Jesus for providing the funds that will ensure that all present students and those who are recruited to programmes in September 2015 will enjoy a high standard of student experience, and of teaching and learning in particular. Indeed, we have put new investment in place to enhance this experience further over the next three years. Students who successfully complete their studies will graduate with a degree from the University of London and teaching will continue on the Kensington Square site until at least the summer of 2017.

The Governors of Heythrop and the Society of Jesus are grateful to the University of London for the opportunities which membership of this distinguished body has afforded the College over the past 45 years. Over the next three years, there will be opportunities to celebrate Heythrop's achievements during this chapter of its long history.

The Society of Jesus, the Governors and I are especially grateful to the members of our staff, present and past, who have given outstanding service over many years and who have enriched the College and its students with their dedication and commitment, their generosity and their collegial spirit.

We are grateful to our present and former students, to our many friends and to our collaborators in this University and in universities and colleges

elsewhere. In a special way, we are grateful to the dioceses, religious orders and congregations whose members have taught and studied here and who have supported the College very generously throughout the past 45 years and who, we trust, will continue to collaborate with us in the future.

The Society of Jesus and the Governors of the College are convinced of the importance of providing resources in Britain for the study of theology and philosophy both for those preparing for ministry in the Catholic Church and for those men and women who wish to deepen their understanding of our two specialist subject areas. What's more, our society today needs the engagement in the public square and in private and public sector institutions of those with the skills and training to contribute from the theological and philosophical perspectives to discussion and debate on the issues of the day.

Heythrop College in its many incarnations has survived for more than 400 years because it has changed when change has been needed. Further change is now needed and the Governors are committed to working with our friends and collaborators, especially the Society of Jesus, to continue the mission and work of the College. So, although the College in its current form will come to an end, its mission and work will not.

Michael Holman SJ  
*Principal*