



CDBU NEWS

SPRING 2024

Dear Members and Supporters,

It is a pleasure to give you a brief report on what the CDBU has been doing in recent months. Our redesigned website continues to attract more traffic, but there has also been some concentrated activity since the New Year, with two funded research projects completed in January and February, both of which received attention in the HE press (WonkHe and THE), and some well-received contributions to the blog (see links below). Steve Jones' report on University Governance prompted a response from the Executive Secretary of the Committee of University Chairs, John Rushforth, as well as other coverage and reactions. We have a working group chaired by Steve, who joined the Executive Committee after our January meeting, preparing a set of recommendations for more effective and inclusive university governance.

Other EC members have been active in a variety of ways. Kelli Rudolph, lead author of our [position paper on academic freedom and model ordinance](#), has taken part in a series of events. In January she presented the principles of academic freedom at a [public meeting organised by UCL UCU](#) to raise awareness of the silencing of speech on University campuses over Palestine. In March she spoke at a ["Symposium on Academic Freedom and Ethical Scholarship in Times of Precarity and Genocide"](#) at the University of Cambridge where she presented the CDBU model ordinance and spoke about the importance of academic freedom as a fundamental and non-partisan value of higher education. Kelli has also been invited to contribute in April to the Westminster [Higher Education Forum: Next Steps for Freedom of Speech in UK Higher Education](#) online event, where she will be speaking about the impact of the new Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill, with a particular emphasis on academic enquiry and debate. The CDBU drew on Kelli's work for our submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Ms. Farida Shaheed, who is reporting to the Human Rights Council on academic freedom and freedom of expression in educational institutions.

On 29 January EC member Ron Barnett gave a perfectly timed presentation on the challenges facing higher education in England to the Fabians Education Policy Group which held a special meeting on universities in the four nations. Ron will be sharing his thoughts with the whole CDBU in an upcoming blog post.

In a mid-February edition of the *Oxford Magazine*, which is edited by CDBU Trustee Tim Horder, EC Chair Julian Preece reflected on the CDBU's role and its roots in Oxford University: 'A case for the defence' (*Oxford Magazine*, Fifth Week, Hilary Term, 2024). This will shortly be available on the blog too.

Susan Bruce is leading a campaign to persuade the Government to enable the British Academy to help Palestinian academics affected by the Israeli invasion of Gaza, using the Researchers-at-Risk Scheme developed to help to Ukrainian academics after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Caroline Lucas MP has tabled [Early Day Motion 505 \(EDM 505\) on Palestinians and Researchers at Risk Scheme](#). Susan has produced a briefing for colleagues and friends to use in writing to their MPs to ask them to sign EDM 505 or to raise the issue with Government in other ways; two MPs have thus far agreed to write to government and/or to table written questions. Susan invites any CDBU member willing to write to their MP on this matter to contact her at s.e.bruce@keele.ac.uk and she will forward a briefing.

Deputy-Chair Sean McMahon and Press Officer Becca Bashford have revived the What University Meant to You section of our website, with several new contributions, including from new EC member, Chris Cunningham.

At the January meeting of the EC, held in Senate House courtesy of Royal Holloway, Anne Sheppard, former chair of the EC, was confirmed as the new Company Secretary, replacing Jon Hall who resigned from the EC last November. We thank Jon for his service to the CDBU over several years, which included master-minding the meeting in the House of Commons in September 2022 and proposing the research projects scheme. We also revisited our terms of reference, agreed formally to adhere to the Roberts Rules of Order when making decisions, and revised our aims, resolving that we want to:

- ✦ Defend the autonomy of institutions of higher education against interference by government or other external bodies;
- ✦ Support academic freedom in research and teaching and encourage understanding of the rights and responsibilities associated with it;

- ✦ Advocate for a university education accessible to all those able to benefit from it and explore models of financing which acknowledge it as a public good as well as a private good;
- ✦ Promote inclusive teaching and research as interdependent and the corresponding principles of diversity and equality;
- ✦ Champion educational values which empower students through teaching and research which gives a priority to intellectual and personal development, civic engagement and transferable skills;
- ✦ Resist the rising tide of managerialism in universities and restore the role of academic values in university governance.
- ✦ We always welcome new ideas for campaigns, submissions to the blog or other sections of the website or other contributions.

With best wishes for Easter

Julian Preece, *Chair of the Executive Committee*

Funded Research:

- ✦ [University Governance: Views from the Inside](#), by Prof Steve Jones
- ✦ [Satisfied customers? Interrogating 'the student experience' in the neoliberal university](#), by Prof Leo McCann

Recent Blog highlights:

- ✦ Susan Bruce, [Antisemitism, Culture Wars, and the Trumpian Assault on Higher Education \(1\): the US House Education and Workforce Committee Hearing of 5th December 2023](#)
- ✦ Kelli Rudolph, [Antisemitism, Culture Wars and the Trumpian assault on Higher Education \(2\): Free Speech Protection in the US and the UK](#)
- ✦ David Feldman, [Antisemitism and Criticism of Israel](#)